

Jesus and the Climax of Israel's Story:
An Exploration of the Hermeneutic of 'Story' with reference to
Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21.

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Declaration:

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Abstract:

The past forty years have witnessed a gradual paradigm shift from historical-critical to literary-critical approaches in biblical studies, which, among other things, has resulted in a renewed interest in the unity of the canonical literature and the recognition that, while containing a variety of genres, the Bible has an inherent narrative structure. This thesis examines the nature of the narrative world generated within Israel's scriptures in particular, which we refer to as Israel's 'story', and, after determining the formative role that this 'story' played in the production of these writings, argues for the hermeneutical value of Israel's 'story' for reading the Synoptic Gospels. The thesis, therefore, is to be situated within the fields of biblical hermeneutics and Synoptic Gospels exegesis.

Our thesis unfolds through dialogue with N.T. Wright's concept of 'story' and offers a critique of his methodology and specifically his exegesis of the 'coming of the son of man' saying in Mark 13 and parallels. In Part A, we explore with Wright the potential of the concept of 'story' to unify historical, theological, and literary enquiries with respect to biblical studies, and consequently refine the concept independently of Wright by drawing upon Jan Assmann's idea of 'mnemohistory', the postfoundationalist theology and revised theological hermeneutic of Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Michael Fishbane's work in 'inner-biblical exegesis'.

In Part B, it is argued that the traditions that emerged concerning Jesus of Nazareth are deliberately intertwined with Israel's 'story' so as to assert Jesus' central role in bringing this narrative to a climax. Together with James Dunn, each Gospel is viewed as a unified performance of the received traditions, where each selectively

draws from the sources available, both literary and oral, to provide a fresh improvisation of the tradition for its own context. Our exegesis of the eschatological discourse in each of the three Synoptic Gospels employs the tools of narrative criticism and a chastened redaction criticism to demonstrate the explicatory power that the hermeneutic of 'story' provides in reading what have been notoriously challenging passages for New Testament scholars.

Our particular focus is to examine the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' saying in order to evaluate Wright's conclusion that the 'coming of the son of man' expression must be read as a metaphor with the destruction of the temple as its referent. Our own findings agree with Wright that the expression is to be read as a metaphor, but, contrary to Wright's conclusion, we determine that the referent is Jesus' vindication at the *eschaton*.

Table of Contents

	Acknowledgements	ii
	Abbreviations	iii
	Primary Texts and Translations	v
§1	Introduction	1

Part A:

In Search of a Consistent Hermeneutic: The Potential of ‘Story’

§2	The ‘Coming of the Son of Man’: Literal or Metaphorical?	6
§3	What’s in a Story?	28
	§3.1 Story and Historical Studies	39
	§3.2 Story and Theological Studies	56
	§3.3 Story and Literary Studies	77
§4	The Making of Israel’s Story	100
§5	Summary – Part A: The Hermeneutic of ‘Story’	135

Part B:

Exegetical Analysis

§6	Story and the Synoptic Traditions	141
§7	The Climax of Israel’s Story in Mark	162
§8	The Climax of Israel’s Story in Matthew	230
§9	The Climax of Israel’s Story in Luke	293
§10	Summary – Part B: Story and Improvisation within the Synoptic Traditions	363
§11	Conclusion	369
	Appendices	373
	Bibliography	379

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my wife, Fiona, who in 25 years of marriage has barely known a time when I have not been pursuing academic studies of some form or another. Her patient endurance and serving attitude have enriched my life.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (Freedman, David Noel (ed.))
AJT	<i>Asia Journal of Theology</i>
Ant.	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i> (Josephus)
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BCOT	Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3 rd ed. (Arndt, William)
BDF	<i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Blass, Friedrich)
BI	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BSL	Biblical Studies Library
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
BTCL	Biblical and Theological Classics Library
CBQ	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CNTOT	<i>Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament</i> (Beale, Gregory K. and Carson, D.A. (eds.))
CTR	<i>Criswell Theological Review</i>
DBI	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Imagery</i> (Ryken, L. et al. (eds.))
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> (Green, Joel B. et al. (eds.))
DNTB	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i> (Evans, Craig A. and Porter, Stanley E. (eds.))
DOTP	<i>Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch</i> (Alexander, T. Desmond and Baker, David W. (eds.))
DTIB	<i>Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible</i> (Vanhoozer, Kevin J. (ed.))
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
ExpT	<i>The Expository Times</i>
GTJ	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
HSHJ	<i>Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i> (Holmén, Tom and Porter, Stanley E. (eds.))
HTS	<i>HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies</i>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JATS	<i>Journal of the Adventist Theological Society</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>

<i>JVG</i>	<i>Jesus and the Victory of God</i> (Wright, N.T.)
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	Library of Second Temple Studies
<i>LTQ</i>	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>
NAC	The New American Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the New Testament
<i>NIDNTT</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> (Brown, Colin (ed.))
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (VanGemeren, Willem A. (ed.))
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTG	New Testament Guides
NTL	New Testament Library
<i>NTPG</i>	<i>The New Testament and the People of God</i> (Wright, N.T.)
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OBT	Overtures to Biblical Theology
<i>OTP</i>	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> (Charlesworth, James H. (ed.))
OTL	Old Testament Library
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RSG</i>	<i>The Resurrection of the Son of God</i> (Wright, N.T.)
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SSEJC	Studies in Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity
<i>ST</i>	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
<i>Tik</i>	<i>Tikkun</i>
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
<i>TMSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
<i>War</i>	<i>Jewish Wars</i> (Josephus)
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WBComp	Westminster Bible Companion
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

Primary Texts and Translations

Unless indicated otherwise, Hebrew quotations are from Elliger, K. and Rudolph, W. (eds.), *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 4th Corrected Edition, 1990) and Greek quotations are from Rahlfs, A. (ed.), *Septuaginta: id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1935) for the Septuagint (including Apocrypha) and Aland, B. & K., et. al. (eds.) *Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 27th ed., 1993) for the New Testament. English quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America, 1989) for the Old Testament, Old Testament Apocrypha, and New Testament; Charlesworth, James H. (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* 2 Vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985) for the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha; Vermes, Geza, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1998) for the Dead Sea Scrolls; and, Whiston, William, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, new updated ed., 1987; first pub. 1736) for Josephus.

§1 Introduction

The gradual collapse of historical-criticism's hegemony over biblical studies during the last quarter of the twentieth century has seen the rise of literary-critical approaches to fill the void. Without dispute this period has witnessed a greater appreciation for the various genres at play within the canonical writings, and the narrative world created by these writings themselves. As its first point of concern, this thesis examines the narrative world generated by Israel's scriptures, which we refer to as Israel's 'story', and demonstrates how this unfolding narrative was actually influential in the production of these sacred texts. Subsequently, this thesis argues for the hermeneutical value that 'story' brings to the process of biblical interpretation, particularly of the Synoptic Gospels. The thesis argues that the Synoptic Gospels are best viewed as the authoritative testimony of the early church's memory of Jesus which each Gospel performs through careful improvisation of the narrative world evident within Israel's scriptural tradition and thus requires a hermeneutic of Israel's 'story' to be read accordingly. The primary aim of this thesis is to offer a rationale for, and explanation of, the hermeneutic of story as an exegetical approach for reading the Synoptic Gospels, and secondly, to demonstrate the benefits of this hermeneutic through a reading of the eschatological discourse in Matthew, Mark and Luke. The thesis, therefore, is to be situated within the fields of biblical hermeneutics and Synoptic Gospels exegesis.

Our thesis engages in particular with N.T. Wright's concept of 'story' as developed in the first two volumes of his series on Christian Origins and the Question of God. In part, our own proposal functions as a critique of Wright's position, which we

undertake through an examination of his methodology and an evaluation of his exegetical conclusions. In the process, we review the concept of ‘story’ as employed by Wright and subsequently reshape it by exploring issues not considered fully in his own programme. The results of our investigation inform the hermeneutic of ‘story’ as we apply it in an exegesis of the Synoptic traditions. The focus of our enquiry centres upon Wright’s distinctive metaphorical interpretation of the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying in the eschatological discourse in each of the Synoptic Gospels and his claim that the referent is the destruction of the temple in 70 CE.

The aim in Part A of our enquiry is to clarify the hermeneutic of ‘story’ so that it can be employed in Part B of the thesis. Our discussion commences with the debate between Wright and Dale Allison over Wright’s insistence that the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying in Mark 13 and parallels must be read as a metaphor. The chapter serves to introduce the chief issue to be explored later in our exegesis and to illustrate Wright’s methodology. In the opening of §3 ‘What’s in a Story?’, Wright’s notion of ‘story’ comes under particular scrutiny, and concerns are identified that require attention if the concept is to meet jointly the demands of historical, theological, and literary enquiries. These matters are the primary focus of the ensuing sub-chapters. In the first, we adopt Jan Assmann’s concept of ‘mnemohistory’ to clarify the relationship between ‘Israel’s scriptures’, the ‘story of Israel’, and the ‘history of Israel’; in the second, we look to Kevin J. Vanhoozer’s doctrine of scripture to specify the relationship between ‘canon’, ‘story’ and the notion of ‘revelation’; and in the third, after judging it to be sufficiently robust for the postmodern age, we adopt Vanhoozer’s revised theological hermeneutic for its capacity to accommodate and explicate the concept of ‘story’.

In §4 ‘The Making of Israel’s Story’ our attention turns specifically to Israel’s scriptures where we observe in dialogue with Michael Fishbane that the intra-canonical intertexture testifies to what was once a dynamic tradition that developed through the process of its transmission. In a manner consistent with Vanhoozer’s hermeneutic, we detect in Israel’s sacred writings the exegetical activities of later generations, who, by means of their creative improvisation, sought to contextualise their own existence within the narrative world of earlier traditions and so identify themselves as the true heirs of ancient Israel. After demonstrating that Israel’s ‘story’ was also influential in the literature of the Qumran community, our thesis subsequently enquires to what extent it was likewise significant in the production of the Synoptic traditions.

Part B of the thesis applies the hermeneutic of ‘story’ as developed in Part A in a reading of the eschatological discourse in Mark, Matthew and Luke. The opening chapter (§6 ‘Story & the Synoptic Traditions’) examines the implications of the hermeneutic for the specific case of reading the Synoptic Gospels, and with special consideration to contemporary Jesus studies. Here we find Wright’s approach to the Synoptic Gospels untenable and adopt instead the methodology of James Dunn, which we shape for our own purposes, and by which means we subsequently fine-tune our exegetical approach. Each Synoptic performance is viewed as its own improvisation of Israel’s ‘story’ in view of the Jesus event, which, while contextualising the Jesus tradition within the narrative world of Israel’s sacred writings, maintains its own internal coherence. In view of this, the primary

exegetical tool we employ is narrative criticism while drawing also upon the insights of redaction criticism.

Three lines of enquiry are common to each exegetical chapter. Firstly, we examine the intertexture with Israel's scriptures in the opening of the Gospel to determine the implied relationship to Israel's 'story'. Secondly, we outline the plot of the performance in order to specify the function of the eschatological discourse. Finally, we provide a detailed analysis of the eschatological discourse, giving attention to its structure and to the interpretation of key terms and expressions, with special consideration given to the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man'.

The literature dedicated to the interpretation of the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 and parallels is voluminous, necessitating selective engagement. To this end, our primary interlocutors are a selection of recently published major commentaries, journal articles and monographs. It is not our intention to offer a comprehensive exegesis of Mark 13 and parallels, or to engage with all the literature related to these passages, but rather to demonstrate how the hermeneutic of story may function as a critical exegetical tool to challenge contemporary exegetical conclusions and to offer a fresh perspective on these enigmatic texts.

In the process of our study, each exegetical chapter includes special areas of focus. The Markan chapter situates our approach to the Gospel in relation to the legacies of Wrede and Schweitzer; outlines Daniel's eschatological horizon and observes how this is evoked and then reframed by Jesus; and explores the background to the

‘desolating sacrilege’, the ‘cosmic signs’, and the ‘coming of the son of man’. Our discussion in Matthew attends to the significance of Jesus’ ‘son of man’ sayings for the development of Matthew’s plot; provides detailed analysis of the structure of the eschatological discourse; critiques the exegetical conclusions of N.T. Wright and R.T. France; and defines the ‘end of the age’, the ‘*parousia*’, ‘birth pangs’, and ‘the end’. Finally, the Lukan chapter examines the *modus operandi* and eschatological vision of John and Jesus; explores the ‘imminent judgement’ theme; critiques Hans Conzelmann’s view of Luke’s eschatology and Darrell L. Bock’s ‘two fall’ eschatological schema; investigates Luke’s presentation of the eschatological perspective of the disciples; and defines the expressions ‘days of vengeance’, the ‘fulfilment of all that is written’, and the ‘times of the Gentiles’.

Our examination of the ‘coming of the son of man’ sayings in the eschatological discourse of the Synoptic Gospels determines, in agreement with Wright, that they are to be read as metaphors rather than literal descriptions of Jesus’ second-coming; but, contrary to Wright, we hold that the referent in each case is Jesus’ vindication at the *eschaton*, rather than the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. Our investigation concludes that each Synoptic performance carefully distinguishes the destruction of the temple from the ‘coming of the son of man’.

Part A:

In Search of a Consistent Hermeneutic: The Potential of ‘Story’

§2 The 'Coming of the Son of Man': Literal or Metaphorical? The need for a consistent hermeneutic.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the contention between N.T. Wright and Dale Allison over the intended meaning of the 'coming of the son of man' saying in the Synoptic traditions.¹ Their dispute highlights the ambiguity still surrounding the interpretation of apocalyptic literature and apocalyptic eschatology within biblical studies. In recent years a growing number of scholars within Jesus studies are reaffirming the proposal of Weiss and Schweitzer that Jesus and his ministry are to be understood in terms of apocalyptic eschatology.² Both Wright and Allison sit firmly within this camp and strongly resist the non-eschatological Jesus portraits published over the final two decades of the twentieth century.³ In this sense our two scholars share much in common inasmuch as they both assert that it is possible to make certain claims concerning the eschatology of Jesus.⁴ It is at this point, however, that their paths diverge both in methodology and conclusions. While a number of differences might be identified, the chief concern for this chapter is to review their respective hermeneutical approach to apocalyptic literature. The issue

¹ Wright and Allison debate the issue head-on in Carey C. Newman (ed.), *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's 'Jesus and the Victory of God'* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999). Allison contributes chapter 7, 'Jesus & the Victory of Apocalyptic', and Wright chapter 13, 'In Grateful Dialogue: A Response.'

² See for example the list of twenty scholars in N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 84; hereafter *JVG*.

³ E.g., J. Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1991); Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1988).

⁴ This is Wright's central theme in *JVG*. Likewise, the topic holds centre stage for Allison in Dale C. Allison Jr., *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1998). See also, Dale C. Allison Jr., *The End of the Ages Has Come: An Early Interpretation of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1985); *idem*, 'The Eschatology of Jesus', in John J. Collins (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* Vol. 1: The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity (New York, NY: Continuum, 1998), 267-302. For a helpful summary of their respective views see Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 16-19.

comes to the fore when interpreting the 'coming of the son of man' saying in Mark 13:24-27: should this language be interpreted literally or metaphorically?

Representing the traditional view,⁵ Allison argues for the former, while Wright, representing the views of a small but significant minority,⁶ insists on the latter.

The question of whether a text is best understood as literal or metaphorical is not isolated to the 'son of man' sayings, but rather is characteristic of the hermeneutical challenge facing the reader of all eschatological literature. For example, paradigmatic for the task at hand is the historical and literary development of the belief in a physical resurrection of the body in Jewish thought. On this point our two authors agree; prophetic passages that in their context are plainly metaphorical, depicting the return from exile, in later generations became scriptural support for the belief in the resurrection.⁷ With reference to Ezekiel's vision of the 'valley of dry bones', Allison remarks that that which was originally intended as "a metaphor for the resuscitation of Israel, by the time we come to the wall of the Dura-Europos synagogue the text is clearly being read as a prophecy of the saints literally exiting their tombs at the consummation."⁸ What was the rationale that legitimised this hermeneutical shift on the part of later Jewish generations? Wright's explanation is informative:

⁵ Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 341. For recent examples of the traditional view see: M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: WJK, 2006); Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007); Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC, Vol. 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001); Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16* (AB; New Haven, CT: Doubleday, 2009).

⁶ For examples of the minority view see: George B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), particularly chapter 14; R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002); and more recently, Rikki E. Watts, 'Mark', in *CNTOT*, 111-249.

⁷ E.g., Ezek 37:1-14; Isa 26:19; and Hos 5:15-6:3.

⁸ Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 157. While the Dura-Europos synagogue dates from the third century CE, explicit references to the resurrection date from the second century BCE (Dan 12:1-3; 2 Macc 7:9-11).

The old metaphor of corpses coming to life had, ever since Ezekiel at least, been one of the most vivid ways of *denoting* the return from exile and *connoting* the renewal of the covenant and of all creation. Within the context of persecution and struggle for Torah in the Syrian and Roman periods, this metaphor itself acquired a new life. If Israel's god would 'raise' his people (metaphorically) by bringing them back from their continuing exile, he would also, within that context, 'raise' those people (literally) who had died in the hope of that national and covenantal vindication. 'Resurrection', while focusing attention on the new embodiment of the individuals involved, retained its original sense of the restoration of Israel by her covenant god.⁹

For Wright then, the later literal interpretation of earlier metaphorical passages is the result of theological reflection of later generations, who in the midst of national and personal anguish for the sake of the covenant, contemplated the significance of their present suffering to the ultimate purposes of God. The literal reading is not arbitrary, unrelated to the metaphorical intention of the passage; on the contrary, it represents a logical extension to the original intention. This observation is instructive, I propose, when addressing the more knotty problem of the 'coming of the son of man' sayings.

The approach of this chapter will be to outline carefully the position of Wright on this matter, since it is he who is arguing for a non-traditional reading of Mark 13. Subsequently, we will analyse Wright's thesis in view of Allison's critique of his work. The goal is to identify areas for further exploration. Thus, the final section of this chapter will outline and briefly discuss directions for further research.

⁹ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 332, emphasis original; hereafter *NTPG*. For the explanation of Wright's use of the lower case 'g' for God see: *NTPG*, xiv-xv.

The 'coming of the son of man' according to Wright

One must appreciate Wright's overall thesis and his methodological approach to avoid misinterpreting his conclusions; a charge of which he is fond of reminding his critics.¹⁰ His primary concern, as a self-proclaimed 'third-quest' advocate, is the identity of the historical Jesus and he approaches his subject in a pincer movement, moving in forward motion from second-temple Judaism and backward from the early Church.¹¹ Wright adopts a 'criterion of double dissimilarity and double similarity' for discerning authentic Jesus sayings.¹² Put simply, Wright postulates that Jesus *must* have been both similar and dissimilar from the Judaism of his day and from the theology of the early Church. In practice, Wright analyses sayings and events in the Synoptic accounts in order to identify Jesus' own 'mindset' within the broader context of the Jewish 'worldview'. By 'worldview' Wright has in mind the lenses through which a society views and understands its world. It may be studied further, according to Wright, in terms of four interacting features: "characteristic stories; fundamental symbols; habitual praxis; and a set of questions and answers (Who are we? Where are we? What's wrong? What's the solution? and, What time is it?)."¹³ By 'mindset' Wright refers to the worldview of a particular individual in interaction with the worldview of the society at large. Worldviews and mindsets "generate a set of 'basic beliefs' and 'aims'",¹⁴ which in turn motivate behaviour. Hence, Wright sees the historian as involved in the complex task of moving from events to analysing mindsets, and from established mindsets to analysing events. Through a

¹⁰ Cf. Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 244-247.

¹¹ Wright, *JVG*, 131.

¹² Wright, *JVG*, 131-33.

¹³ Wright, *JVG*, 138.

¹⁴ Wright, *JVG*, 138.

process of hypothesis and verification, the historian seeks to make sense of the available data.

Wright's eschatology and particularly his approach to apocalyptic imagery finds clearest expression in his interpretation of the 'coming of the son of man' passages in Mark 13 and parallels. He suggests that the Christian Church has largely misunderstood apocalyptic symbolism in these passages and thus erroneously thought of eschatology in terms of the end of the space-time universe. In sharp contradiction, Wright defines eschatology as:

The climax of Israel's history, involving events for which end-of-the-world language is the only set of metaphors adequate to express the significance of what will happen, but resulting in a new and quite different phase *within* space-time history.¹⁵

Wright mocks the view that the 'coming of the son of man' passages somehow refer to the second-coming of Jesus – depicting a literal “human figure travelling downwards towards the earth on actual clouds” – labelling such a reading as an example of “crass literalism.”¹⁶ Rather, Wright insists that the Jews of the first century “knew a good metaphor when they saw one.”¹⁷ Following Caird,¹⁸ Wright interprets the 'coming of the son of man' passages as metaphoric language referring to the pending destruction of the temple, thus vindicating Jesus as a true prophet and rightful king, and his followers as 'true Israel'.

¹⁵ Wright, *JVG*, 208; emphasis original.

¹⁶ Wright, *JVG*, 361.

¹⁷ Wright, *NTPG*, 333.

¹⁸ Wright, *JVG*, 339-68. Cf. Caird, *Language and Imagery*; *idem*, *Jesus and the Jewish Nation* (London: Athlone Press, 1965); George B. Caird and L.D. Hurst, *New Testament Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1994).

True to his methodological approach, Wright reaches this conclusion by seeking to understand Jesus' 'coming of the son of man' saying within the context of second-temple Judaism. He understands the language to be a deliberate attempt on Jesus' part to evoke Israel's sacred traditions and to imbue these with new meaning in view of his own eschatological role within the story. Hence, Wright explores the importance of the saying in its original Danielic context and in various later readings found in Jewish apocalyptic literature for insight concerning its possible significance as a saying of Jesus in the Synoptic traditions. Unfortunately Wright does not provide a detailed exegesis of Daniel 7, only his conclusions.¹⁹ His focus rather is upon how the 'one like a son of man' is to be understood and the type of symbolism being utilised by the writer.

Convinced that a certain amount of confusion exists in the interpretation of apocalyptic literature, Wright seeks to remedy the situation by defining the key terms employed by exegetes: metaphorical; literal; abstract; and concrete.

Strictly speaking, the opposite of *metaphorical* is *literal*. These two words refer to *the way words refer to things*, not to the things themselves. Confusion arises, not least in present discussions, because this pair is regularly muddled up with the words *abstract* and *concrete*, which indicate not *the way words refer to things* but rather *the sort of things words refer to*. Thus "Plato's theory of forms" refers, *literally*, to a doubly abstract entity (the forms themselves, by definition, are abstract, and the theory is an abstract idea about those abstractions). If I say "Plato's whole box of tricks," intending to refer to that same theory, I am referring *metaphorically* to the same abstract entity (or entities). Alternatively, if I talk about "my car," I am referring *literally* to something concrete; and if I say "my old tin can," I am referring *metaphorically*, to that same concrete entity.²⁰

¹⁹ Wright discusses Daniel 7 in Wright, *NTPG*, 291-97.

²⁰ Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 261-62.

Furthermore, the highly symbolic nature of apocalyptic literature prompts Wright to distinguish between three ways in which a symbol might represent its referent.²¹

Literary or *rhetorical* representation is evident when “a writer or speaker uses a figure, within a complex metaphor or allegory, to represent a person, a nation, or indeed anything else.”²² Thus, for example, the four great beasts rising out of the sea in Daniel 7:1-8 are explained to Daniel as referring to four kings and/or kingdoms (Dan 7:17). A second sense of representation is “the *sociological* representation whereby a person or group is deemed to represent, to stand in for, to carry the fate or fortunes of, another person or group.”²³ For example, a king represents a kingdom and ambassadors represent the queen who sent them. The third kind of symbolism Wright identifies is *metaphysical* representation where “heavenly beings, often angels, are the counterparts or ‘representatives’ of earthly beings, often nations or individuals.”²⁴ A prime example here is the angel Michael, one of the chief princes of Israel, warring against the angelic princes of Greece and Persia (Dan 10:10-21). With all three senses of representation found in apocalyptic literature, and with the possibility of two or more senses being intended simultaneously, the interpreter must be careful when reading symbols to avoid confusion.

Wright argues that one must approach the symbolism in Daniel’s vision in a consistent fashion. If the monsters are clearly to be understood as symbolising the kingdoms warring against Israel in a *literary* sense, then surely one should understand the human figure in the same manner, that is, as representing the saints of the Most High (cf. 7:18, 22, 27). The ‘human versus monsters’ symbolism evokes

²¹ Wright, *NTPG*, 289-91.

²² Wright, *NTPG*, 289.

²³ Wright, *NTPG*, 290.

²⁴ Wright, *NTPG*, 290.

for Wright the imagery of Genesis 2 with the “idea of the people of God as the true humanity and the pagan nations as the animals.”²⁵ According to Wright, reading the ‘one like a son of man’ in a *sociological* sense, where the individual is seen as a real historical person who represents Israel, or in a *metaphysical* sense, where he is understood as a transcendent heavenly being, is simply to confuse categories of symbolism.²⁶ Thus, in Wright’s analysis, the referent for the ‘son of man’ figure in Daniel 7:13 has been supplied in the interpretation – ‘the saints,’ who he understands to mean the people of Israel. In taking this position, Wright rejects the suggestion that ‘the saints’ are to be understood as angels, and that any distinction is to be made between ‘the saints of the Most High’ in verses 18 and 22, and ‘the people of the saints of the Most High’ in verse 27. He is also unwavering in his view that the ‘son of man’s’ coming is an ascent not a descent. The direction of travel is “*from earth to heaven*.”²⁷ The ascent of the ‘son of man’ figure may be seen in parallel to Daniel’s deliverance from the lions’ den, where Daniel is lifted up out of the reach of the lions and is vindicated and exalted.²⁸ This is in essence what the vision is about from Wright’s perspective: “the suffering of Israel at the hands of the pagans – more especially, of one pagan monarch in particular, presumably Antiochus Epiphanes – and her coming vindication when the one god reveals himself to be her god and destroys her enemies.”²⁹

²⁵ Wright, *NTPG*, 292.

²⁶ Presumably Wright understands the Ancient of Days figure as *literary* representation as well, with Israel’s God the clear referent.

²⁷ Wright, *JVG*, 361; emphasis original; *pace* Goldingay, who sees the court taking place on earth and the movement of the ‘son of man’ figure from heaven to earth (John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC, Vol. 30; Dallas: Word, 1989), 164, 167).

²⁸ Wright, *NTPG*, 295.

²⁹ Wright, *NTPG*, 296.

Wright denies the notion that the Danielic themes developed in some sort of linear fashion during the second-temple period and that Mark 13 derives from somewhere towards the end of a well-worked tradition. Rather, he insists that the evidence points to a rich tapestry of varied thoughts and aspirations, which at times reflect dependence upon later developments of Daniel 7, and at other times direct recourse to Daniel 7 itself.³⁰ Wright is inclined to view Mark 13 in light of the latter scenario, positing a relatively straight and uncluttered pathway from Daniel to Mark.

Nevertheless, Wright considers that a review of the other literature is essential to presenting an overall picture of the Jewish mindset during the first century CE. In Wright's historical reconstruction, the general consensus within first-century Judaism was that the nation was still in exile.³¹ Yes, they are in their own land, but under the rulership of Caesar not God. Jewish expectation was for YHWH to become King over the entire world, which would be manifest in terms of their deliverance from oppression. The book of Daniel was instrumental in fuelling this hope.

The identification of Rome with Daniel's fourth kingdom is explicit in apocalyptic writings of the period.³² Dated post-70 CE, *4 Ezra*, in a re-reading of Daniel chapter 7, describes the fourth kingdom as a terrifying eagle, an unmistakable reference to

³⁰ Wright, *NTPG*, 318.

³¹ Wright, *NTPG*, 268-70. For a defence of Wright's view see Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus & the Continuing Exile of Israel', in Newman, *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*, 77-100; *idem*, 'Aspects of Exile and Restoration in the Proclamation of Jesus and the Gospels' in James M. Scott, (ed.), *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 299-328; Douglas S. McComiskey, 'Exile and Restoration from Exile in the Scriptural Quotations and Allusions of Jesus', *JETS* 53.4 (2010): 673-96. For a critique, see Steven M Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (SNTSMS 117; Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 12-20; Pitre, *Jesus*, 31-40.

³² It is noticeable that Wright effectively sidelines 'son of man' sayings in the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 En. 37-71) from his discussion. See his discussion in *NTPG*, 318 and *JVG*, 361 respectively. The 'son of man' sayings in *1 Enoch* 48 are perhaps the most awkward to fit into his thesis and by neglecting to give these sufficient attention Wright leaves himself vulnerable to the charge that he selects his material prejudicially and intentionally avoids passages that might compromise his position. The significance of the omission is all the more pressing when one considers the strength of Wright's language in *JVG*. How can one speak of 'nothing' when not everything of relevance has been discussed? Why overlook *1 Enoch* 48 for discussion?

Rome.³³ In Ezra's vision, the one who confronts and pronounces judgement on the eagle is a lion, which is later explained to Ezra to be the Messiah (or 'anointed one') from the line of David. Daniel's 'four kingdom' motif also finds expression in the late first or early second century apocalyptic writing of *2 Baruch* 39-40. Once more the fourth kingdom is considerably harsher than the preceding three; this time depicted as a great forest and the final ruler as a tall cedar. At the manifestation of the 'anointed one', who is represented by a vine and a fountain in Baruch's vision, the forest will be uprooted and the tall cedar taken to Mount Zion where it will be judged and killed. The resulting rule of the 'anointed one' will bring protection and peace to the Lord's people. As with *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch* is clearly messianic in its reuse of Danielic themes. Wright suggests the pathway to a messianic reading of Daniel 7:13-14 may have come about by interpreting the passage in conjunction with other portions from Daniel that can more readily be understood in this manner. He notes:

It looks as though some first-century exegetes, combining Daniel 9 (which is explicitly messianic) with Daniel 2 (which can be made so via the figure of the 'stone', which is a messianic term elsewhere), had achieved... a radical new possibility: a messianic, i.e. individualized, reading of Daniel 7.13f.³⁴

Wright considers it probable that Daniel 2 is the referent of the "obscure oracle" which Josephus testifies incited his countrymen to war against Rome in the belief that one of their own would become ruler over the world.³⁵ "Despite Josephus' own interpretation" of the oracle as a reference to Vespasian, who was appointed emperor while in Judea, Wright suggests that "the common first-century view shines through: from the Jews would rise a leader, a great king, who would rule over the whole

³³ *4 Ezra* 11-12.

³⁴ Wright, *NTPG*, 314.

³⁵ *War* 6.312-15. Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 313-14. Wright identifies Daniel 2, read in conjunction with Daniel 9, as Josephus' "obscure oracle." He suggests further that Daniel 7 with its close parallelism to Daniel 2 was also read in this way.

world, destroying all rival empires.”³⁶ Hence Wright asserts that when Daniel 7 “was read by suffering Jews in Jesus’ day, the ‘son of man’ became identified as the anointed Messiah; he, of course, would ‘represent’ the true Israel in the *sociological* sense, standing in her place and fighting her great battle.”³⁷

By the time Wright arrives at Mark 13 in *JVG* most of his supporting evidence is in place. In Wright’s assessment, Jesus’ praxis marks him as a prophet to Israel par excellence, announcing the arrival of God’s kingdom with the promise of vindication for the repentant, on the one hand, and warning of impending judgement upon those who reject his message, on the other.³⁸ Along with parables, apocalyptic language, as understood by Wright, served amicably as a medium for Jesus’ message. For Wright,

apocalyptic language, including language derived from Daniel 7, would quite readily be understood in the first century as a retelling of Israel’s national story, climaxing in the judgement of Israel’s true enemies and the vindication of Israel’s true representative(s).³⁹

Thus, Mark 13 and parallels, identified by some as inauthentic sayings of Jesus,⁴⁰ actually sit well with the Jesus of Wright’s historical reconstruction. But this is only the case, in Wright’s estimate, if these passages are understood as a prophetic oracle of impending judgement upon first-century Israel, and not as a reference to “some far-off future ‘final judgement’ in the sense of the end of the space-time universe,”⁴¹ a view that Wright insists is totally nonsensical in this setting.

³⁶ Wright, *NTPG*, 304.

³⁷ Wright, *JVG*, 518; emphasis original.

³⁸ Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 147-97.

³⁹ Wright, *JVG*, 325.

⁴⁰ Usually coloured black by those associated with the Jesus Seminar. Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 340 n. 89.

⁴¹ Wright, *JVG*, 325.

In Mark, the discourse takes place on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple, where Jesus and his disciples retreat for the evening. For Wright, the location on the Mount of Olives is instructive in itself. Jesus is enacting the return of YHWH to Zion as prophesied centuries earlier by the prophet Zechariah.

The force of the setting then seems to be that this was Jesus' paradoxical retelling of the great story found in Zechariah 14: in predicting Jerusalem's last great struggle, the 'coming' of YHWH, and the final arrival of the divine kingdom, he was acting to fulfil, in his own reinterpreted fashion, the prophecy of Zechariah.⁴²

From Wright's perspective, this is very close to how the disciples viewed the situation as well. As first-century Jews they were expecting the fulfilment of Israel's hope that YHWH would install his king in Jerusalem replacing the present regime. For the disciples, this king was Jesus. Their question, directed to Jesus in the seclusion of the Mount of Olives, sought to ascertain Jesus' strategy for taking the throne.⁴³ Their hope was for Jesus to usher in the new age, and in accord with Wright's description of the first-century Jewish worldview, this was to be very much a 'this-worldly' kingdom.

With the setting thus laid, Wright embarks on his analysis of Jesus' response to the disciples' question. He proceeds in three sections: 1) The start of the 'woes' and the trials of the disciples (Mark 13:5-13)⁴⁴; 2) Specific signs of emergency (Mark 13:14-23)⁴⁵; and 3) The vindication of the 'son of man' (Mark 13:24-31).⁴⁶ Jesus opens his discourse with a warning for the disciples not to be deceived by impostors who will present themselves as YHWH's anointed for the purpose of delivering Israel into her glorious future. The new kingdom will be preceded by 'messianic woes', Israel's

⁴² Wright, *JVG*, 345.

⁴³ Wright, *JVG*, 346.

⁴⁴ Wright, *JVG*, 346-8.

⁴⁵ Wright, *JVG*, 348-60.

⁴⁶ Wright, *JVG*, 360-65.

new birth announced by birth pangs. There will be occurrences of national and personal distress, with opponents arising within one's own household⁴⁷ as well as in the political sphere, but the disciples, as Israel's true representatives, are to endure to the end, where they will be eventually vindicated.

But how shall this vindication take place? Jesus announces the imminent doom of Jerusalem, the city that has now become his and their tormentor. There will come a time when the appropriate action is not to endure, but to flee. Rather than view Mark 13:14-23 as pseudo-prophecy, written up after the temple's demise, Wright finds it more plausible to view the account as "extrapolations from ancient biblical prophecy."⁴⁸ According to Wright, Jesus weaves together three strands from Israel's prophetic tradition. Making up the first strand are a number of ancient references where YHWH's prophets announce eminent judgement upon his own covenant people.⁴⁹ In those instances, Israel's leadership typically rejects the rebuke in preference for the empty promises put forward by the false prophets of the day.⁵⁰ In the second, Wright discerns the unmistakable allusion to the Maccabean crisis and reapplication of the 'desolating sacrilege' imagery as found particularly in Daniel 9.⁵¹ Finally, the third strand consists of the cosmic language employed by the prophets to symbolise YHWH's destruction of Israel's enemies, in particular Babylon, now used by Jesus ironically in relation to Jerusalem's own destruction.⁵² For Wright, the cosmic language functions in Mark 13 in the same manner as it does

⁴⁷ Mark 13:12 evoking Mic 7:2-10. Wright regards this as "a first-class example of Jesus picking up a storyline from the prophetic tradition and retelling it so as to focus on his own work" (Wright, *JVG*, 348).

⁴⁸ Wright, *JVG*, 349.

⁴⁹ In particular Wright notes Ezekiel's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and the escape of survivors to the mountains (Ezek 7:12-16). Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 349.

⁵⁰ E.g. Deut 13; Jer 6:13f. Cf. Jer 8:1-13; 23:16-17.

⁵¹ Cf. 1 Macc 1:54. See also Dan 11:31; 12:11.

⁵² E.g., Isa. 13:9-10; cf. Mark 13:24-5.

in Isaiah: to highlight the theological significance of such an 'earth-shattering' event. The prophets had once announced Babylon's destruction and Israel's escape. Jesus now announces Jerusalem's destruction and his disciples' escape.⁵³

Wright can find no evidence within the biblical or extra-biblical traditions to suggest an interpretation of the 'coming of the son of man' saying in terms of Jesus' second-coming. Rather, Wright argues that Jesus applied the 'son of man' saying messianically, in a manner similar to its use in *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*, to refer to his own vindication in and through the destruction of the temple.

The 'coming of the son of man' is thus good first-century metaphorical language for two things: the defeat of the enemies of the true people of god, and the vindication of the true people themselves. Thus, the *form* that this vindication will take, as envisaged within Mark 13 and its parallels, will be precisely the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. ...As a prophet, Jesus staked his reputation on his prediction of the Temple's fall within a generation; if and when it fell, he would thereby be vindicated... not only as a prophet, but as Israel's representative, as (in some sense) the 'son of man'.⁵⁴

Israel's hope – the return from exile and the vindication of the true people of God – is coming to fruition; not through the Jerusalem cult, which is about to be destroyed, but through Jesus the Messiah and his followers.

⁵³ Wright, *JVG*, 358.

⁵⁴ Wright, *JVG*, 362, emphasis original. It is evident at this point that Wright ultimately wants to include a sociological sense in the New Testament use of the expression, cf., *JVG*, 519.

Can Wright be wrong? An assessment by Allison

Why does Wright so vehemently defend his metaphorical reading of the 'coming of the son of man' in Mark 13? Does Wright believe that holding to a literal interpretation will result in an error-ridden Jesus?⁵⁵ Indeed, this is Allison's personal view: Jesus, after the pattern of other millenarianists, "did in fact erroneously hail the end as near."⁵⁶ Alternatively, does Wright believe that holding a literal interpretation will ultimately prove the Gospels to be historically unreliable in that the concept of a transcendental 'son of man' appearing in the clouds is more likely to be the product of the early church than the historical Jesus? Wright's apologetic agenda is unmistakable: either the Gospels accurately portray "the actual events of Jesus' life and his kingdom-proclamation," or "the Gospels got it wrong and Christianity is indeed ill founded."⁵⁷ Personally convinced of the former, Wright seeks to demonstrate that the error lies not in the Gospels, but in the traditional interpretation of the text.

Although he does not articulate it as such, Allison's critique of Wright's thesis addresses each direction of the pincer movement in Wright's methodology. In regard to Wright's depiction of second-temple Judaism, Allison questions Wright's position that the Jews of Jesus' day were *not* looking for the end of the world and objects to Wright's insistence that all cosmic language is metaphorical.⁵⁸ At the heart of the debate is the nature of apocalyptic language, and in particular, the way it depicts the 'end of this age'. Secondly, from the direction of the early Church, Allison

⁵⁵ Allison, 'Jesus', 137; cf. Wright, *JVG*, 342.

⁵⁶ Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*, 166, 169.

⁵⁷ Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 251.

⁵⁸ Allison, 'Jesus', 126-28.

challenges Wright to square his metaphorical reading of Mark 13 with possible parallel passages in Paul and Peter.⁵⁹

What was the hope of Israel? Allison challenges the appropriateness of Wright's phrase 'the end of the space-time universe' as an adequate representation of mainline New Testament scholarship's response to the question.⁶⁰ Is this what the likes of Rudolf Bultmann, E.P. Sanders, and particularly Weiss and Schweitzer espouse? In Allison's assessment, Wright has misrepresented these scholars on this point. After all, 'the end of the space-time universe' is Wright's language, not the language of those to whom he attributes it. Allison personally prefers to speak of a *transformed* or *remade* heaven and earth,⁶¹ a view Wright concedes is approaching his own.⁶² Yet the apparent similarity is just that: merely 'apparent'. Wright retorts, "Has Allison been fighting a shadow all along in his opposition to the reading of apocalyptic that I and others have expounded?"⁶³

Clearly there is substantial variation between Wright and Allison over how the earth will be renewed, and more importantly, how apocalyptic relates to this event. For Wright, Israel's hope for a *renewed* earth, rather than its annihilation, validates his point of view that cosmic language, which speaks for example of the stars plummeting to the earth, must be understood as metaphorical language referring to 'this-worldly' events, and not the dissolution of the cosmos.⁶⁴ For Allison, on the other hand, apocalyptic writers utilised cosmic language to describe the events

⁵⁹ Allison, 'Jesus', 134-35, 139-40.

⁶⁰ Allison, 'Jesus', 128-30.

⁶¹ Allison, 'Jesus', 134.

⁶² Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 262.

⁶³ Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 262.

⁶⁴ Cf. Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 265.

surrounding the remaking of a renewed earth. In this regard, Allison suggests that apocalyptic writers share much in common with millenarian movements throughout history.⁶⁵

Allison asks Wright, “How can we tell when eschatological language is metaphorical and when it is not?”⁶⁶ In other words, what is it about the cosmic language of Mark 13:24-25 that requires it to be read as metaphor? For Wright, *every* second-temple Jew would understand the language as metaphor,⁶⁷ but for Allison the matter is not so obvious. Allison argues that some texts lend themselves readily to a metaphorical interpretation,⁶⁸ while others just as readily invite a literal reading.⁶⁹ He seeks to undermine Wright’s thesis by providing a wide array of texts, including non-Jewish writings, that utilise cosmic language and that defy a metaphorical reading.⁷⁰ If these are to be read literally, Allison challenges, what makes Mark 13:24-25 any different, or for that matter, ‘the coming of the son of man in the clouds’ in Mark 13:26-27?⁷¹

However, while Allison argues that cosmic language at times should be read literally, he is unable to present a case that Mark 13 *must* be read this way. His claim that there are no “clear textual prods” in Mark to suggest a metaphorical reading fails to take seriously the unmistakable dependence of the passage upon Daniel 7, which he

⁶⁵ Allison, ‘Jesus’, 137-39. See also Allison, *Millenarian Prophet*.

⁶⁶ Allison, ‘Jesus’, 130. See also Allison’s critique of Caird’s position in Allison, *End of the Ages*, 84-90, cf., Caird, *Language and Imagery*.

⁶⁷ Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 333.

⁶⁸ For example, Allison doubts that “Joel, or the author of Acts after him, really expected the moon to become bloody (Joel 2:31; Acts 2:20)” (Allison, ‘Jesus’, 130).

⁶⁹ “The Qumran War Scroll prophesies a real eschatological battle, complete with literal angels” (Allison, ‘Jesus’, 130).

⁷⁰ In support Allison lists: Joshua 10, where the sun stands still; *1 Enoch* 70:6 [*sic*], which foretells of the stars changing their course; as well as passages from *Barnabas* 15:8, Lucan’s *Pharsalia* 1.72-80, Seneca’s account of the Babylonian astrologer, Berosus, and the *Sibylline Oracles* 2:200-202.

⁷¹ Allison, ‘Jesus’, 130-34.

concedes is metaphorical.⁷² Thus, neither scholar is able to provide conclusive evidence to support the view that Mark 13 *must* be read either literally or metaphorically. In the end, we conclude that the best approach is the reading that makes best sense of the text and that gives due consideration to the intertexture within the passage. In this regard, Wright's objection to a literal interpretation on the basis that the idea of Jesus' second-coming is foreign to the context – the disciples' question concerns the destruction of the temple – does have merit.⁷³ Although he does not address it as such, Wright's argument here is based upon the narrative integrity of the Synoptic accounts. However, Wright's own analysis gives insufficient attention to the unique contribution that each Synoptic Gospel makes to the Jesus tradition. The question remains: how does Wright's thesis hold up when due weight is given to the narrative integrity of each Synoptic account?

Allison also asks whether Wright has sufficiently clarified the relationship between Mark 13 and other related New Testament passages. Presenting 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, where Paul recounts a tradition very similar to that in Mark 13, Allison invites Wright to explain why this passage should be understood literally and Mark 13 metaphorically. Wright takes up the challenge by presenting four critical observations:⁷⁴ 1) The passage is not describing the 'rapture', in the traditional sense, but a welcoming committee, such as that which goes out of a city to greet the visiting king, and returns with him to the city; 2) It is the saints who ascend after the pattern of Daniel 7, the Lord descends; 3) In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, a parallel passage, Paul only speaks of the saints being 'changed', which should caution against reading 1

⁷² Allison, 'Jesus', 130.

⁷³ Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 341-42.

⁷⁴ Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 266-68. See also N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (London: SPCK, 2003), 213-19; hereafter *RSG*.

Thessalonians too literally; and 4) Though there is continuity between Jesus and Paul, it is questionable hermeneutical practice to read Paul and to project his theology back onto Jesus, failing to take into account Paul's post-resurrection perspective.

Clearly this represents Wright's initial thoughts on the topic and no doubt a more developed exegesis will follow in a later volume. Nevertheless, one wonders how Wright can object to Allison including Paul in the equation, particularly when Wright's methodology is to approach the Jesus question from both first-century Judaism and the early church. It is evident, to date, that Wright has given insufficient attention to the latter. We could add to Allison's query the phenomenon that is found in Luke-Acts, where before the Sanhedrin Jesus declares: "from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (22:69), a comment Wright would argue must be understood as metaphorical, and yet in Acts 7:55-56 we find the same imagery on the lips of Stephen with respect to his vision of the ascended Lord.⁷⁵ In view of Luke's account of the ascension, it is difficult to avoid the literal reading in this instance. Moreover, not only is a literal reading most appropriate in Acts 7, but the language is employed specifically to describe Jesus' exalted state rather than the destruction of the temple. It appears some work lies ahead for Wright to explain adequately the hermeneutical shift that occurs from Jesus to the early church.

Allison makes a similar point. Unanswered by Wright, at least in his initial response, is Allison's challenge for him to explain the reapplication of the 'thief in the night'

⁷⁵ Wright provides no discussion of Acts 7:55-56 in either *NTPG*, *JVG* or *RSG*.

simile in 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10 and Revelation 3:3 (cf. Matt 24:43-44; Luke 12:39-40). For Wright the simile is one of a cluster of stories that Jesus employs to describe the return of YHWH which is embodied in his own journey to Jerusalem. YHWH visits his people through his kingdom agent and catches them unprepared.⁷⁶ How can Wright explain the hermeneutical shift that takes place in the early church where the same simile now has Jesus' second-coming as the clear referent? Allison also awaits reply regarding a number of passages that for him speak clearly of a radical dissolution of the earth as we know it.⁷⁷ Most challenging to Wright's thesis is 2 Peter 3:10: "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up." Even if this is also to be understood as metaphorical language, it is questionable whether Wright's eschatological schema does justice to the above text. While Wright brings welcomed attention to the significance of the temple's destruction as judgement upon Israel's leadership and the corrupt temple cultus, as well as vindication of Jesus' own claims to be Israel's true leader, to describe this as the transition from 'this age' to 'the age to come' in a manner analogous to the transition between the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages⁷⁸ does not appear to account sufficiently for the expectation in 2 Peter. Besides, the 'day of the Lord' in this context is more likely to be a reference to Jesus' second-coming than to the destruction of the temple.

⁷⁶ Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 639-40.

⁷⁷ Allison lists several references in the Sibylline Oracles, *Sib. Or.* 2:196-210; 3:75-90; and 4:171-92 that express the belief in a radical end to this present world. Cf. Allison, 'Jesus', 139.

⁷⁸ Wright, 'In Grateful Dialogue', 260.

Avenues for further research

For Allison, the Gospels got it right, but Jesus with his apocalyptic message got it wrong and the early Church found itself adjusting to unfulfilled expectations. For Wright, on the other hand, Jesus got it right, the Gospels and the early Church got it right, but modern scholarship got it wrong. Just who is right and who is wrong?

To Wright's credit, he has given considerable attention to methodology. His basic premise is sound: Jesus must have been both similar and dissimilar from late second-temple Judaism and from the early church. His assumption that the Synoptic Gospels are basically historically reliable sources is manifestly a contentious issue, but if his reading of them and his subsequent portrait of Jesus adequately explains both the sayings and deeds attributed to Jesus, and the events of his life and death, then it is a thesis worth exploring further. However, Allison has challenged Wright's argument, questioning whether Wright has correctly understood the eschatological horizon of second-temple Judaism and whether his presentation of Jesus' eschatology adequately accounts for the eschatology of the early church. That is, based on Wright's own basic premise, there are several significant questions that remain unanswered.

The debate between Wright and Allison is the catalyst for our own enquiry. In *NTPG*, Wright gives particular attention to how Israel's scriptural tradition provided the narrative framework for the Jewish worldview during the late second-temple period. Moreover, in *JVG*, Wright argues that Jesus' words and deeds as presented in the Synoptic traditions demonstrate purposeful engagement with this meta-narrative with the result that Jesus emerges as its climax. Wright's agenda is

primarily a historical enquiry, his goal to identify the 'historical' Jesus. Our own investigation is primarily, although necessarily not exclusively, a literary enquiry, and seeks to explore the eschatology of Jesus as portrayed in each of the Synoptic Gospels with particular consideration given to the intertexture with Israel's scriptures as one avenue of critique of Wright's hypothesis. Our first point of enquiry, however, is to examine Wright's concept of 'story' itself in order to assess its potential for the task at hand.

§3 What's in a Story?

Introductory comments on method

Our interest in the concept of 'story' is indebted to the work of N.T. Wright, where the notion is fundamental.¹ Wright is among an increasing number of biblical scholars who realise the urgent need to amalgamate the insights from historical, literary and theological enquiry into the task of biblical studies.² Under the gaze of postmodern critique, it is increasingly apparent that the practice of pursuing these disciplines in isolation from one another fails to take seriously the complexity of both the subject matter and the process of academic enquiry itself. Not only is an interdisciplinary approach now considered prudent, it is essential.³ In Wright's estimate, 'story' has the potential to bridge the gulf that has often existed between these disciplines.

Seen from the perspective of one story, the Bible divides for Wright into five acts: Act 1 – Creation; Act 2 – Fall; Act 3 – Israel; Act 4 – Jesus; Act 5 – Church.⁴ The production of the New Testament writings in Act 5, scene 1 is the result of the early church's reflection upon, and proclamation of, the significance of Jesus (Act 4) in view of the preceding Acts 1-3.⁵ Moreover, while there are hints as to how the biblical story will end, the task of the church throughout the ages is to improvise, based upon the story thus far. This suggests for Wright a new way of understanding

¹ Cf. Wright, *NTPG*.

² Wright, *NTPG*, 139. Cf. Craig G. Bartholomew, 'Introduction', in Craig Bartholomew et al. (eds.), *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics, Vol. 1; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), xxiii-xxxi (xxvii).

³ Cf. Tremper Longman III, 'Literary Approaches and Interpretation', in *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 103-124 (113).

⁴ Wright, *NTPG*, 132, 141-42.

⁵ Wright, *NTPG*, 143.

how the Bible, as story, may function authoritatively for the people of God. The story of the Bible inculcates a particular way of seeing the world, that is, a particular worldview, and equips one for appropriate participation as the people of God within it. Indeed, Wright suggests that there is evidence of such improvisation within the biblical tradition itself:

The Israelites retold the story of creation and fall. Jesus retold, in parable and symbol, the story of Israel. The evangelists retold, in complex and multifaceted ways the story of Jesus.⁶

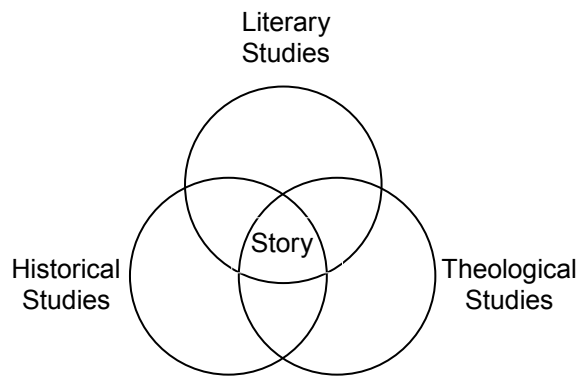
As the story gradually unfolds, each phase or act in the story is rehearsed with a view to demonstrating continuity with what has gone before and establishing an appropriate frame of reference for how to move ahead.

It is this claim for the authoritative nature of the biblical story that is of specific interest for our enquiry. The crux of any biblical theology seeking to establish the unity between the Old Testament and New Testament writings that make up the Christian canon is to establish the significance of Jesus for both bodies of literature. Wright's thesis argues that 'story' is a principle that unifies these writings. That is, the New Testament writers understood the significance of Jesus in terms of his import for Israel's 'story' as witnessed in Israel's sacred traditions. Thus, the legitimacy of the New Testament writings is, in no small manner, linked to their capacity to explain and bring to denouement the plot and themes articulated in the scriptures of late second-temple Judaism. In other words, Jesus' authenticity as the central eschatological character in Israel's 'story' must be demonstrated through recourse to that story itself.

⁶ Wright, *NTPG*, 142.

In Part B of this present enquiry, we examine the Synoptic Gospels for evidence that the story of Israel does indeed provide a controlling hermeneutical principle for the writers of these narratives and test Wright's hypothesis by selecting as our primary sample the notoriously challenging 'coming of the son of man' saying found in the eschatological discourse in each Synoptic account. Prior to this, however, we must explore more fully the relationship of 'story' to historical, literary and theological studies.

The Interdisciplinary Potential of 'Story'



Perhaps postmodernity's most devastating critique of modernism is its insistence that all knowledge is socially conditioned, thus essentially undermining the modernist pursuit of, and at times claim to, complete objectivity. The challenge is primarily an epistemological one, questioning our capacity to know our subject matter with any degree of certainty. With his goal to explore the "historical origin of Christianity,"⁷ Wright acknowledges that epistemological concerns lie at the heart of his task. To this end, Wright adopts a form of 'critical realism', which he explains as:

a way of describing the process of 'knowing' that acknowledges the *reality of the thing known, as something other than the knower* (hence realism), while also fully acknowledging that the only access we have to this reality lies along the spiralling path of *appropriate dialogue or conversation between the knower and the*

⁷ Wright, *NTPG*, 79.

thing known (hence ‘critical’). This path leads to critical reflection on the products of our enquiry into ‘reality’, so that our assertions about ‘reality’ acknowledge their own provisionality.⁸

In practice, Wright’s form of critical realism proceeds through a method of hypothesis and verification/falsification that, in addition to taking into account all the empirical data, seeks to arrange this data in a coherent fashion within an overarching worldview and in relation to the stories that characterise this worldview.

For Wright, worldviews are “the grid through which humans perceive reality,”⁹ and of which stories are a fundamental component. Stories function to articulate worldview, depicting the way people view the world and their position within it, and so undergird the manner in which people live. Indeed, human conversation and action may be seen as “enacted narratives.”¹⁰ This approach directs the focus upon the big picture and the broad strokes that make up the picture. Thus, one commences with an initial hypothesis that considers all the sense data available and the stories that depict a community’s view of the reality.¹¹ The hypothesis offers a story that endeavours to explain other stories. Hence, verification takes place through the ability of the hypothesis to offer clearly and simply the best explanation of the relevant information and to further our understanding of other stories within a worldview.¹² As such, Wright affirms,

there is no such thing as ‘neutral’ or ‘objective’ proof; only the claim that the story we are now telling about the world as a whole makes more sense, in its outline and detail, than other potential or actual stories that may be on offer.¹³

⁸ Wright, *NTPG*, 35; emphasis original.

⁹ Wright, *NTPG*, 38.

¹⁰ Wright, *NTPG*, 38; presenting the insights of Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: NDUP, 2nd ed., 1985).

¹¹ Wright, *NTPG*, 37.

¹² Wright, *NTPG*, 42-43.

¹³ Wright, *NTPG*, 42.

In Wright's analysis, knowledge emerges through dialogue, revealing its fundamentally relational nature, and finds expression through the medium of stories.

Since literary works are the major source for exploring the historical period in question, how does Wright's critical-realist theory of knowledge relate to our reading of literature? Applied to the act of reading, Wright's relational epistemology appeals for a 'hermeneutic of love,' where both parties are mutually affirmed at each stage of the reading process – reader-text, text-author, author-event.¹⁴

First, we can affirm *both* that the text does have a particular viewpoint from which everything is seen, *and* at the same time that the reader's reading is not mere 'neutral observation'. Second, we can affirm *both* that the text has a certain life of its own, *and* that the author had intentions of which we can in principle gain at least some knowledge. Third, we can affirm *both* that the actions or objects described may well be, in principle, actions and objects in the public world, *and* that the author was looking at them from a particular, and perhaps distorting, point of view.¹⁵

Thus, attention is given to each party in its own right, without collapsing it into another, while at the same time recognising the interdependence of both parties. What Wright does not do, however, is give adequate reason for the adoption of his 'hermeneutic of love', deferring fuller treatment to "another occasion."¹⁶ Granted, his task is primarily an historical one and already projected to fill six volumes, but for our enquiry it is evident that attention must be given to outline a sufficiently robust hermeneutic for the postmodern age that can account for the concept of 'story' as an integral hermeneutical principle. We take up this task in §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies' below.

¹⁴ Wright, *NTPG*, 64.

¹⁵ Wright, *NTPG*, 64; emphasis original.

¹⁶ Wright, *NTPG*, 64.

Regarding literature itself, Wright suggests that “human writing is best conceived as the articulation of worldviews, or better still, *the telling of stories which bring worldviews into articulation.*”¹⁷ Behind all literature, regardless of genre, Wright believes there to be an underlying narrative that is either implicit or explicit within the text itself, and that it is the task of the literary critic to identify this story and the worldview it expounds, and thus arrive at the deepest level of meaning in the text.¹⁸ Hence, in Wright’s programme, story holds a privileged position among all genres, but is this defensible? After all, one might legitimately counter-claim that “[t]here is a variety of genres... in Scripture and they simply cannot be contained within the single genre ‘story’.”¹⁹ This is a significant objection and must be sufficiently accounted for in the hermeneutic we adopt in §3.3 ‘Story and Literary Studies’ and adequately demonstrated in §4 ‘The Making of Israel’s Story’ that follows.

Turning from literature to history, Wright, noting the frequent confusion between history-as-events and history-as-writing-about-events, offers a critical-realist definition of history as “neither ‘bare fact’ nor ‘subjective interpretations’, but...rather *the meaningful narrative of events and intentions.*”²⁰ By this statement, Wright wishes to acknowledge that the historian is far from a detached, neutral observer, but rather, like the data under inspection, has an historical-social context that shapes the historian’s point of view and influences the process of selection, organisation and interpretation.²¹ For Wright, neutrality is impossible, but this admission does not abandon all hope of ever accessing the historical event through

¹⁷ Wright, *NTPG*, 65; emphasis original.

¹⁸ Wright, *NTPG*, 65-6.

¹⁹ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, ‘Story and Biblical Theology’, in Craig Bartholomew et al. (eds.), *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics, Vol. 5; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 144-71 (159).

²⁰ Wright, *NTPG*, 82; emphasis original.

²¹ Wright, *NTPG*, 83, 88-89.

the available historical documents.²² Though potential distortions exist in the point of view of the source and/or that of the reader, Wright believes that access to these events is nonetheless achievable.

Applying his critical-realism to historical enquiry, Wright argues for an historical method likewise involving hypothesis and verification. For Wright, a good hypothesis ought to be able to propose a relatively simple narrative that accounts for the data available and that casts light on related topics, whereas verification will necessarily assess the resulting tension between these criteria in any given proposal, with primary weight given to the inclusion of data. Historical knowledge, therefore,

[i]s arrived at, like all knowledge, by the spiral of epistemology, in which the story-telling human community launches enquiries, forms provisional judgments about which stories are likely to be successful in answering those enquiries, and then tests these judgments by further interaction with data.²³

The aim is not merely to describe ‘what happened’, but to analyse “human intentionality” and explain ‘why it happened’.²⁴ At the societal level, Wright proposes that the historian identify the cultural worldview of a people group by examining the ‘symbols’ (which for Israel includes “cultural objects” such as the temple), ‘characteristic behaviour’ (for example, Israel’s feasts and festivals) and their ‘literature’ (“particularly the stories they tell”).²⁵ Individual mindsets may then be compared and contrasted with the worldview of the society as a whole and an overarching story proffered that accounts for the actions of individuals and

²² Wright, *NTPG*, 89. Cf., Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth is God’s Truth* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1983), 131.

²³ Wright, *NTPG*, 109.

²⁴ Wright, *NTPG*, 109.

²⁵ Wright, *NTPG*, 112. Wright reserves ‘worldview’ for societies and cultures and ‘mindset’ for individuals. A ‘mindset’, therefore, is a personalised worldview.

communities in the events that transpired. In short, the historian constructs a narrative or story that best explains the evidence.

In view of Wright's argument that all history writing is in effect story-telling, we explore in §3.1 'Story and Historical Studies' the suitability of the term 'story' for Israel's scriptures. What is implied by the expression 'story of Israel'? Firstly, what is the relationship between the 'story of Israel' and Israel's scriptures? Moreover, if the 'story of Israel' is an attempt to reconstruct the underlying narrative that unifies the literature in this corpus, does that mean that the 'story of Israel' is in some way an attempt at historiography? Asked more directly: What is the relationship between the 'story of Israel' and the 'history of Israel'? We respond to these questions in the following sub-chapter.

For Wright, events, at their basic level, are enactments of underlying narratives, which in turn articulate the 'mindset' of an individual or 'worldview' of a community.²⁶ "Worldviews have to do with the presuppositional, pre-cognitive stage of a culture or society" and relate to the "ultimate concerns" of a people group, including "perceptions of reality" and the existence (or non-existence) of God or gods.²⁷ Thus, worldviews are inherently theological and since "we cannot stand outside our own worldviews,"²⁸ Wright insists that no literary or historical enquiry can afford to neglect theological concerns with respect to both the subject and the enquirer. Theological reflection is inescapable for any investigation into the origin

²⁶ Wright, *NTPG*, 116.

²⁷ Wright, *NTPG*, 122-23.

²⁸ Wright, *NTPG*, 121.

of Christianity. To this end, Wright seeks to demonstrate the relationship between worldviews, stories and Christian theology.

For Wright, worldviews are identifiable and examinable by attending to four characteristic effects of worldview in a particular culture or society – stories, questions, symbols and praxis. In brief, “worldviews provide the stories through which human beings view reality,” stories that “answer the basic questions that determine human existence” and express themselves in “cultural symbols” and community “praxis.”²⁹ Wright envisions a complex matrix that interconnects each of the four characteristics upon which we might plot related terms. Literature, for example, is an aspect of community praxis that functions to tell stories, address basic questions, describe and prescribe community praxis and cultural symbols, and may itself become a cultural symbol.³⁰ Theological reflection, which likewise takes place within the worldview of the community, “suggests certain ways of telling the story, explores certain ways of answering the questions, offers particular interpretations of the symbols, and suggests and critiques certain forms of praxis.”³¹

The recognition that the community’s literature (including those writings that have been granted special status) and the community’s theological reflection are inevitably secondary to the community’s prevailing worldview necessarily evokes the question of whether the ‘symbolic universe’ created through these constructs bares any resemblance to the ‘universe-as-it-really-is’.³² In short, the observation challenges the concept of revelation in the various ways that it is conceived. In response,

²⁹ Wright, *NTPG*, 123-24.

³⁰ Wright, *NTPG*, 125.

³¹ Wright, *NTPG*, 126.

³² Wright, *NTPG*, 127.

Wright proffers a critical-realist theology which he develops by associating story with metaphor.

Recognition of god-language as fundamentally metaphorical does not mean that it does not have a referent, and that at least some of the metaphors may not actually possess a particular appropriateness to this referent. In fact, metaphors are themselves mini-stories, suggesting ways of looking at a reality which cannot be reduced to terms of the metaphor itself. ...[M]etaphors and stories are in fact more basic within human consciousness than apparently 'factual' speech, and recognizing the essential storied nature of god-talk is therefore no bar to asserting the reality of the referent.³³

Thus, Wright argues that the controlling worldview story or stories specified by the community in theological reflection is metaphorical language designed to speak of ultimate reality. For Wright, understanding story as metaphorical does not thereby guarantee the veracity of all theological language, but neither does it rule out the potential for these stories to serve as vehicles for what might be called 'revelation'.

From a theological perspective, Wright leaves unexplored the nature of scripture and its relationship to the 'controlling story' of the community. Are the canonical writings to be identified with the 'controlling story' of the community? If not, what is the relationship between the two? We might also ask: In what way are the canonical writings different from other literature of the community? In summary, what is required is an adequate doctrine of scripture that can account for Wright's concept of 'story' and his claim that 'story' functions in some way as revelation. We take up this challenge below in §3.2 'Story and Theological Studies'.

Wright proposes that historical, literary and theological enquiry as they relate to biblical studies can be unified under the single rubric of 'story'. Our brief overview

³³ Wright, *NTPG*, 129-30.

of his methodology has identified key issues with respect to each discipline that require further investigation. These concerns are the primary focus of the following three sub-chapters, which we undertake with the view to assessing the hermeneutical value that ‘story’ brings to the task of biblical interpretation. In brief: §3.1 ‘Story and Historical Studies’ explores the relationship between ‘Israel’s scriptures’, the ‘story of Israel’, and the ‘history of Israel’; §3.2 ‘Story and Theological Studies’ examines the relationship between ‘canon’, ‘story’ and the notion of ‘revelation’; and §3.3 ‘Story and Literary Studies’ searches for a sufficiently robust hermeneutic for the postmodern age that can account for both the concept of ‘story’ as an influential hermeneutical principle and the resulting place of privilege this gives ‘story’ over other genres. Together, the argumentation in these sub-chapters defines Israel’s ‘story’ as a theological-historical construct that seeks to identify the plot in Israel’s scriptures, and thus clarifies our use of the expression as we seek to investigate and sketch the development and contours of Israel’s ‘story’ in §4 ‘The Making of Israel’s Story’, and indeed, throughout the remainder of the thesis.

§3.1 Story and Historical Studies

The task of this present sub-chapter is to explore the relationship between the ‘story of Israel’, ‘Israel’s scriptures’, and the ‘history of Israel’. We begin with Brueggemann’s critique of the historical-critical method and observe with him the gradual demise of history’s domination over biblical studies during the last quarter of the twentieth century. This signals for Brueggemann an end to enquiries ‘behind the text’ in preference for the examination of the ‘world within the text’ and ‘in front of the text’, a move which effectively exorcises historical enquiry in relation to biblical studies altogether. In an attempt to restore the import of history for biblical studies we adopt a critical-realist epistemology and examine the concept of ‘story’ relating it to the notion of ‘testimony’ and ‘memory’. It is argued that the term ‘story of Israel’ is an appropriate designation for the reconstruction of Israel’s remembered past, or in other words, Israel’s testimony to its past, as articulated in its sacred writings.

In his *Theology of the Old Testament*, Walter Brueggemann critiques the historical-critical method as practised during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exposing the positivistic epistemology undergirding the reconstructions of Israel’s ancient history written during this period.¹ He argues, for example, that the developmental portrait of Israel constructed by Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) shares the same assumptions as the rationalism and empiricism of the eighteenth-century: “An epistemology of the human knower as an unencumbered objective interpreter who was understood to be a nonpartisan, uninvolved reader of the data.”² According to Brueggemann, this same misguided optimism is evident in the historical-critical

¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).

² Brueggemann, *Theology*, 13.

work of twentieth-century scholars even though they represent a significant shift from Wellhausen's evolutionary model. Source-critical approaches after the manner of Wellhausen, and tradition-critical approaches such as that of von Rad, have not been able to provide the historical certainty once assumed.

The critical evaluation of the Biblical Theology movement by James Barr³ and Brevard Childs⁴ marks for Brueggemann the beginning of the end of history's close association with the Bible. With Leo Perdue⁵ he announces the 'collapse of history'; no longer can history function as a paradigm for biblical studies. Extending Perdue's critique of von Rad to the historical-critical method in general, Brueggemann asserts:

The "collapse" signifies not only a recognition that something like salvation history is too innocent, but that the epistemological assumptions of European modernity, with their hegemonic privilege, have now come up short. Our capacity to know, as it has been assumed, is radically called into question. Our assumption of progressive developmentalism is exposed as a self-serving conviction. Our uncritical notion of a singular, developmental line in cultural history, culminating with Euro-American culture, is now exposed to the challenges of a disordered pluralism, each element of which has its own version of what constitutes reality.⁶

As a consequence, Brueggemann calls a halt to the pursuit 'behind the text', a term he borrows from the influential work of Paul Ricoeur.⁷ Since the 'world behind the text' is deemed unknowable, attention is now directed firstly to the 'world in the text', the rhetoric of the text itself, and secondly to the 'world in front of the text', "the life-world generated by the text and mediated to the hearers of the text as they

³ James Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: OUP, 1961); *idem*, *Old and New in Interpretation: A Study of the Two Testaments* (London: SCM, 1966), 65-102; *idem*, 'Story and History in Biblical Theology', *TD* 24 (1976): 265-71; *JR* 56 (1976): 1-17.

⁴ Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology in Crisis* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1970); *idem*, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

⁵ Cf. Leo G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History* (OBT; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

⁶ Brueggemann, *Theology*, 48-49.

⁷ Brueggemann, *Theology*, 57. For Ricoeur's works see n. 167 *op. cit.*

receive it.”⁸ The resulting paradigm shift liberates the generative potential of the text. The ‘world behind the text’ no longer functions as the controlling norm that governs the meaning of the text. Freed from the constraints of historical criticism the text has

the chance to evoke a genuine *novum* in the imaginative act of hearing, so that the text may indeed subvert, offering an alternative version of reality that creates new perspective, new possibility, and new activity well beyond the assumed world behind the text.⁹

Brueggemann’s critique aptly summarises the distaste followers of the new hermeneutic have for the historical-based approaches of earlier generations. But has he gone too far? As welcome as the move away from the atomising tendencies of the historico-critical method to a renewed focus on the text as a whole is, it does not follow that history writing is now defunct. The real issue, as Brueggemann so ably identifies, is a question of epistemology: the impossibility of objective knowledge. That fault has been found with the basic assumptions of past scholars – who were working under the false premise that through means of the text and archaeology they were accessing and documenting ‘real history’, free from interpretive bias – does not necessitate the abandonment of historiography and its significance for biblical enquiry. It does mean, however, a radically new playing field.

In recent times, historians of ancient Israel are increasingly aware of the distinction between history, as events that took place in the past, and historiography, as a written account of past events.¹⁰ Historiography by its very nature is a highly selective and

⁸ Brueggemann, *Theology*, 58.

⁹ Brueggemann, *Theology*, 58.

¹⁰ E.g., V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994). He affirms, “many disputes could be settled if the various terms of discussion were consistently defined and applied. If, as Philip Davies suggests, the term *history* were

interpretative venture. To recount every detail from a past period is an absurd thought, for even if one had sufficient resources, a highly improbable scenario, the task would take longer than the actual history itself. Rather, historians gather, itemise and evaluate evidence and then present their findings in a manner that they believe best illustrates the significance of their topic, be it military campaigns, the role of women, agricultural practices or whatever.

The demise of the myth of absolute objectivity does not result in absolute subjectivity. That we can never know with complete certainty does not necessitate that we are unable to know anything. The point was sufficiently argued by N.T. Wright above, who applies a critical-realist epistemology to historical enquiry, affirming that at least partial knowledge of the past is achievable and that investigating the past is a necessary and worthwhile pursuit. But Wright rejects the historical-critical path of enquiry in preference for exploring the big-picture questions that relate to worldviews and the stories, praxis and symbols that articulate worldview. He contends that we learn about a society, past or present, by attending to the stories they tell about the world, themselves, and their place within the world. Stories are fundamental to how people perceive reality. Likewise, Wilder observes:

There is no ‘world’ for us until we have named and language and storied whatever is. What we take to be the nature of things has been shaped by our calling it so. This therefore is also a story-world. Here again we cannot move behind the story to what may be more ‘real’. Our language-worlds are the only worlds we know!¹¹

reserved for ‘the events of the past as a *continuum*’ and the term *historiography* for ‘the selective telling of those events,’ much confusion could be avoided” (60). The Davies quotations are extracted from: J. Rogerson and P.R. Davies, *The Old Testament World* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1989), 218. Cf. Edward H. Carr, *What is History? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge January-March 1961*, ed. R.W. Davies (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2nd ed., 1987).

¹¹ Amos N. Wilder, ‘Story and Story-World’, *Int* 37 (1983): 353-64 (361).

This is not a claim that “there is no world *except* language world”, a view Wilder denies, but an insistence that our knowledge of reality is always mediated via the stories we tell about it.¹² In short, his claim is epistemological rather than metaphysical.

If stories are foundational to the way we perceive reality and inform the way we engage with the world as individuals and communities, then it follows that ‘story’ is a reasonable option for discussing our past. Indeed, for Iain Provan, our access to the past is inescapably dependent upon the testimony of others which comes to us in the form of a story or stories.

Testimony, story-telling if you like, is central to our quest to know the past; and therefore interpretation is unavoidable as well. All testimony about the past is also interpretation of the past. It has its ideology or theology; it has its presuppositions and its points of view; it has its narrative structure; and (if at all interesting to read) it has its narrative art, its rhetoric.¹³

Provan insists that archaeological evidence also fits this scenario, since without the interpretation of the archaeologist the retrieved artefacts are mute.¹⁴ Ultimately, no historical enquiry is “independent of testimony” of some form; the past is only knowable through critical reflection upon the testimony of others.¹⁵

¹² Wilder, ‘Story’, 362; emphasis original.

¹³ Iain W. Provan, ‘In the Stable with the Dwarves: Testimony, Interpretation, Faith, and the History of Israel’, in V. Philips Long et al. (eds.), *Windows into Old Testament History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 161-197 (168).

¹⁴ Ian W. Provan, ‘Knowing and Believing: Faith in the Past’, in Craig Bartholomew et al. (eds.), *‘Behind’ the Text: History and Biblical Interpretation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics, Vol. 4; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 229-66 (247).

¹⁵ Provan, ‘Knowing’, 249.

The identification of ‘story’ with ‘testimony’ is a beneficial analogy.¹⁶ It calls to mind the story a witness might give as evidence in a court of law. The witness is called upon to give her ‘story of events’. It is a testimony in narrative form. While not all aspects of the analogy can or should be pressed, the following points are important to observe. Firstly, through means of the swearing-in process the witness declares all subsequent discourse to be truthful. As such, the witness makes a truth-claim, contending that her perspective on events best depicts what actually transpired. To extrapolate this point, a ‘story’ by this definition claims to articulate a worldview that best represents reality. Secondly, it is to be noted that there is usually more than one witness called upon to give evidence, and that more frequently than not, and especially if one witness is called by the defence and another by the prosecution, two or more conflicting stories may vie for the judge’s or jury’s acceptance. The conflicting stories told in the courtroom simply reflect the pluralism that is characteristic of this world, where competing truth-claims everywhere abound, not least in enquiries into the history of Israel.¹⁷ It does not necessarily follow, however, that each claim holds equal weight. The testimony of a renowned expert in the relevant field can substantially assist the prosecution’s case and undermine the dubious claims of a defendant.¹⁸ Thus, while there is the potential for many stories, not all stories are equally credible, and at some point, as in the courtroom, a judgement needs to be made.

¹⁶ Cf. Brueggemann, *Theology*, 117-44. Brueggemann’s text has been influential in my adopting this approach. See also the fruitful employment of the analogy by Philips Long to historiography: V. Philips Long, ‘Old Testament History: A Hermeneutical Perspective’, in *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 86-102.

¹⁷ Compare, for example, the ‘maximalist’ approach proffered in Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2003) with the ‘minimalist’ approach in K.W. Whitlam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹⁸ While Israel’s scriptures inculcate faith in YHWH as the one true deity, these writings frequently acknowledge and engage with competing worldviews that, like that of Canaanite faith and culture, exerted tremendous influence upon the descendants of Abraham. The testimony of the ‘expert’ in this case frequently fell to Israel’s prophets who claimed to speak on YHWH’s behalf, the only true deity.

Finally, when the lawyer for the prosecution delivers her closing speech she presents before the judge or jury a reconstruction of events that draws together in a coherent fashion all the evidence presented before the court, including the explanations provided for certain exhibits along with the testimony of witnesses. Her summation will argue for both the interconnectedness and disconnectedness of the evidence. In advocating her version of ‘the facts’, she will emphasise the testimony of one witness over that of another while some testimonies she may discredit altogether. The resulting ‘meta-story’ appeals to the judge or jury for acceptance and a charge of guilty against the defendant. The term ‘meta-story’ thus affirms both the interrelatedness and the autonomy of individual stories. It asserts that one can construe individual stories into a larger all-encompassing story with the conviction that this reconstruction best represents reality, while at the same time recognising that in the process of development this story exerts varying degrees of ‘violence’ upon the original stories that form its basis. Furthermore, as with individual stories, the potential for conflicting meta-stories also exists. Indeed, when the lawyer for the defendant provides his summation he will posit an alternative reconstruction seeking the jury’s support and vying for his client’s innocence. The presence of conflicting meta-stories represents the dialogical nature of truth-claims within a pluralistic world where each claim joggles for ascendancy. Once again, however, the judge or jury will be asked to decide between the two presentations and to reach a verdict regarding the accused.

It may be helpful to consider the task of the historian of ancient Israel as emulating in many ways the task of the lawyer identified above, and to view the resulting

historiography as closely resembling the characteristics of a ‘meta-story’. Viewed in this light, what the historian produces is understood as a *reconstruction* of Israel’s past that affirms both the reality of this past and our own provisional knowledge of it. It, too, is a testimony in narrative form, a truth-claim that states that this particular reconstruction most adequately accounts for the evidence available, while implicitly or explicitly acknowledging that the data might be construed otherwise. Moreover, as with the lawyer, the historian is dependent upon the testimony of others for reconstructing the course of events and speculating as to the reasons why they transpired as they did. In effect, this equates to believing, or conversely, disbelieving the testimony of others. The point is made by Provan, who argues that all history writing is “fundamentally, ‘the believing of someone else when that person says that he remembers something’; or to put it more accurately, it is the openness to acceptance of accounts from the past that enshrine such people’s memories.”¹⁹

Clearly the association of history writing with ‘story’ in terms of ‘testimony’, as illustrated above, does not by definition undermine the truth-value of the final product.²⁰ Provan insists that “all historiography is story”,²¹ but how reliable is story as a vehicle for truth? Philips Long finds a helpful analogy by comparing historiography as narrative with representational art such as portraits, landscapes and seascapes.²² A close-up examination of a landscape painting, for example, reveals the creative genius of the painter, when the tree you marvelled at from a distance, up-close appears as a multitude of indeterminate brush strokes, sharing much in common with abstract art. From this close perspective the painting shares nothing in

¹⁹ Provan, ‘Knowing’, 247.

²⁰ Cf. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987).

²¹ Provan, ‘Knowing’, 251.

²² Long, *Art*, 63-68. The following is loosely based on Long’s argument.

common with the reality it represents. To gain the intended impression you must view the painting from the appropriate vantage point. What distinguishes representational art from non-representational varieties is not the artistic medium but a commitment by the former to the “*referential constraints*”²³ of the subject. In the case of a personal portrait, the artist covenants to represent fairly the subject so that the final painting will be recognisable as such. The covenant however is bilateral, the portrait is an artistic work and the onus is upon the viewer to respect the conventions under which the artist is operating. One cannot protest that, on close examination, the facial features lose all resemblance to that of the subject’s. Any critique should be appropriate to the conventions of the selected art form.²⁴ Long concludes:

What is true of visual art (paintings) is true also of verbal art (narratives). The difference between a narrative whose primary purpose is representational (or referential) and one whose primary purpose is aesthetic is the degree to which the artist is constrained by the actualities of the subject matter.²⁵

Thus, the creative or artistic features of narrative or story do not disqualify this genre as an adequate medium for representing reality. Although this literary style may function at times in the service of fantasy, such a role is not innate to the genre: historiography and story make just as suitable companions. Moreover, historiography *as* story does not abandon one to an abyss of epistemological despair. A good portrait discloses not only the facial features of the subject but also certain character traits. Through the medium of paint one may know something of the

²³ Long, *Art*, 67; emphasis original.

²⁴ It is immediately apparent that an adequate hermeneutic that addresses each aspect of the author-text-reader dialogue is essential for ancient Israel studies since a significant portion of the evidence comes in the form of literature. See §3.3 ‘Story and Literary Studies’ below.

²⁵ Long, *Art*, 68. So also Sternberg, who argues that it is the discourse’s *intention* that distinguishes it as either historiography or fiction: “...history-writing is not a record of fact – of what ‘really happened’ – but a discourse that claims to be a record of fact. Nor is fiction-writing a tissue of free inventions but a discourse that claims freedom of invention. The antithesis lies not in the presence or absence of truth value but of the commitment to truth value” (Sternberg, *Poetics*, 25).

subject; through the medium of story one may obtain a degree of clarity concerning the past.

But what of Israel's scriptures?²⁶ The historical truth-value of Israel's sacred traditions is hotly debated among recent practitioners, with views ranging from a reserved optimism²⁷ to unbridled scepticism.²⁸ James Barr argues for the label 'story' over that of 'history' for the narrative sections of the Old Testament with the recommendation that Old Testament studies proceed simultaneously in three directions giving consideration to story, tradition history and historiography.²⁹ 'Story' for Barr acknowledges the literary unity of the writings, with individual parts contributing to the impact of the whole, and also the chronological framework in which these writings are set. Barr is also willing to recognise that in places the story approaches his understanding of historiography and that other portions may "constitute a fairly reliable *source* of historical evidence."³⁰ But for Barr the 'non-historical' elements such as myth, aetiology, divine intervention and the uncritical use of sources resist the attribution of historiography to this corpus. For Barr, historiography is defined by the assumptions and methodology of the historical-critical period. For example, dismissing the charge of positivism, he explains the view is not "that God does not act in history and does not affect it. ... It simply observes that we do not apply 'history' to a form of investigation which resorts to

²⁶ We use the terms Israel's scriptures / writings / sacred traditions / Bible and Old Testament interchangeably largely for stylistic reasons – to avoid repetition – while at the same time recognising that the term 'Old Testament' is a uniquely Christian perspective on this body of literature.

²⁷ E.g., Eugene H. Merrill, 'Old Testament History: A Theological Perspective', in *NIDOTTE* Vol. 1, 68-85.

²⁸ E.g., T.L. Thompson, *The Origin Traditions of Ancient Israel: I. The Literary Formation of Genesis and Exodus 1-23* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

²⁹ Barr, 'Story', 265-71.

³⁰ Barr, 'Story', 267.

divine agency as a mode of explanation.”³¹ The concession is problematic. Israel’s ‘history’ for Barr is the ‘historical-critical story’ of its past. It is a story told that negates (through silence) the influence of Israel’s God, to whom Israel ascribes its very existence.

Did Israel’s God influence its past or not? If the answer is no, then without question it is legitimate to exclude such allusions from a historiography of Israel, as does the historical-critical approach. However, if the answer is yes, then how can an honest testimony fail to acknowledge it? The reality is that we cannot know for certain, in an objective sense, one way or the other.³² As Barr’s concession reveals, a historical-critical historiography offers a restricted and therefore limited perspective on Israel’s history. In reality, it is only one of a number of possible stories that might be told with respect to Israel. Barr has privileged the historical-critical approach to history writing at the expense of other valid investigations into the past.³³

At the heart of the matter is an adequate definition for ‘historiography’. Is the intention of a text to speak truthfully about the past sufficient to warrant the label

³¹ Barr, ‘Story’, 267-68.

³² Cf., Philip Davies, ‘The History of Ancient Israel and Judah’, *ExpT* 119.1 (2007): 15-21: “The fact is that in most cases we simply do not and cannot know whether or not an event that the Bible narrates actually occurred or not” (16).

³³ There is evidence in his subsequently published *The Concept of Biblical Theology* that Barr was in the process of broadening his concept of historiography. In his chapter devoted to ‘Story and Biblical Theology’, Barr responds to Perdue’s argument for the ‘collapse of history’ by offering five ‘paradigms’ for historical enquiry: 1) “history as basic to the ‘historical-critical method’” with its interest in sources, traditions, redaction etc.; 2) investigation into the historicity of events reported in the Bible, e.g., the fall of Jericho; 3) the study of Israel within its ANE environment; 4) “history as a medium through which God acts and makes himself known”; and 5) historical reading “which is interested (not necessarily exclusively interested) in the persons who wrote the texts and their thinking, the reality of the persons and events related, the time of writing and its relation to other events and writings of the time, the nature and sequence of divine acts and divine speeches retold, and so on” (James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (London: SCM, 1999), 348-49). How these ‘paradigms’, or perhaps better ‘approaches’, relate to each other is unclear and Barr offers no rationale for their adoption in this chapter. Barr sees his concept of ‘story’ relate firstly to point 4), secondly to point 5) and partly to point 3).

historiography, as implied by Long, or should the term be reserved for those writings that not only exhibit intention but also abide by the methodology of modern western practices with its foundations in ancient Greek historiography? The answer to this question will not be readily forthcoming; the issue divides current scholarship and no consensus appears imminent. In his recent defence of Barr's original position, Ernest Nicholson opposes the term 'historiography' as an adequate description for the Old Testament narratives, placing specific emphasis upon the 'critical' attitude that the ancient Greek historians Herodotus and Thucydides held towards their sources, an attitude he believes is not evident in Israel's writers.³⁴ A.R. Millard, on the other hand, in his article published the same year as that of Nicholson's, discusses and then rejects each of Barr's objections.³⁵ Illustrating his points with parallels from Ancient Near Eastern (ANE), ancient Greek, and more recent writings, Millard contends for Israelite historiography. He does not, however, object to the designation 'story' for the biblical writings, in fact he willingly acknowledges the creative activity of the writers, while at the same time affirming the reliability of the end product.

The writer's store of language, experience, and imagination can all contribute to enriching the narrative without smothering the reality of the events he describes or detracting from it. ...Literary, folkloristic, etiological, paradigmatic, and all other ways of studying the narratives are to be welcomed, but no one of them can take priority over any other except for the assessment of them for what they claim to be on their own terms.³⁶

No doubt a certain ambiguity will remain with the term 'historiography' in contemporary scholarship, but even with its difficulties, the emphasis upon history

³⁴ Cf. Ernest Nicholson, 'Story and History in the Old Testament', in Samuel E. Balentine, and John Barton (eds.), *Language, Theology, and the Bible: Essays in Honour of James Barr* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 135-150.

³⁵ Cf. A.R. Millard, 'Story, History, and Theology', in A.R. Millard et al. (eds.), *Faith, Tradition, and History: Old Testament Historiography in its Near Eastern Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 37-64.

³⁶ Millard, 'Story', 49-50. Cf. Sternberg, *Poetics*, 23-35.

writing *as* narrative is to be welcomed. Whether or not one is satisfied with the designation of historiography for Israel's scriptures, it is evident that both modern and Israelite history writing share in common, firstly, the claim to speak truthfully about the past and, secondly, the adoption of narrative as the preferred medium for the task. Beyond this, it appears that, for the time being at least, general consensus will be more difficult to achieve. What is to be categorically denied is that the designation of 'story' to the biblical literature implies that the material is of no historical value at all. The point is made by Rendtorff, who laments the radical reconstructions of Israel's history to appear in the field towards the close of the twentieth century:

What has changed is the scholarly attitude to the sources, in particular to the main core of sources, namely the texts of the Old Testament itself. The change becomes particularly obvious in a recent debate about the question, "Is it possible to write a history of Israel without relying on the Hebrew Bible? ... Therefore one of the basic changes in the field seems to be the separation of the history of Israel from the Hebrew Bible by some scholars relying exclusively on archaeology. I have high regard for archaeology, and I try to follow its main developments. But I do not understand the *raison d'être* of a history of Israel that is not carried out in close contact with the Hebrew Bible..."³⁷

It is mind-boggling how any legitimate enquiry into Israel's past can neglect to attend to Israel's own writings as a significant testimony to those events. In accord with the observations made above, Israel's scriptures provide the historian with the indispensable opportunity to explore the stories that articulate the nation's worldview. Surely no thorough historical pursuit can be complete without exploring this aspect. We find Provan's conclusion compelling: since the biblical testimony is

³⁷ Rolf Rendtorff, 'The Paradigm is Changing: Hopes – and Fears', in V. Philips Long (ed.), *Israel's Past in Present Research* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 51-68 (62-63). Rendtorff challenges the position of those like Thompson, *The Origin Traditions*, 40, n. 31: "The following chapters make abundantly clear the necessity of separating biblical interpretation from modern historiography. This once achieved, ends the crisis in biblical scholarship." See the recent critique of the so-called 'Copenhagen School' by Jens Bruun Kofoed, 'Epistemology, Historiographical Method, and the "Copenhagen School"', in Long et al. (eds.), *Windows*, 23-43.

“the major testimony about Israel’s past that we possess, it must be folly to marginalize biblical testimony in any modern attempt to recount the history of Israel.”³⁸

So where does this leave our investigation into the relationship between ‘Israel’s scriptures’, the ‘story of Israel’, and the ‘history of Israel’? A possible way forward may be found in Jan Assmann’s concept of mnemohistory, which, among other things, explores the capacity of a community’s collective memory to inculcate a sense of social identity.³⁹ A community’s received traditions continue to be remembered for the relevance they provide in the “ever-changing present.”⁴⁰ These memories construct a narrative by which a community gains self-understanding and direction for how to live in the contemporary context – social groups are fashioned by the stories they tell about themselves.⁴¹ The task of exploring a community’s mnemohistory requires that specific attention be given to the received tradition of the community, the past as remembered and transmitted by the community, rather than a focus upon past events as they might be reconstructed through historical-critical investigation. Assmann explains:

Unlike history proper, mnemohistory is concerned not with the past as such, but only with the past as it is remembered. It surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic

³⁸ Provan, ‘Knowing’, 262.

³⁹ Cf. Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1999). I am indebted to Barr for alerting me to this work; cf. Barr, *Concept*, 354.

⁴⁰ Assmann, *Moses*, 10.

⁴¹ Assmann affirms, “If ‘We Are What We Remember,’ we are the stories that we are able to tell about ourselves” (Assmann, *Moses*, 14). Assmann cites the title of Michael S. Roth, ‘We Are What We Remember (and Forget)’ *Tik* 9.6 (1994): 41-42, 91. So also Davies: “More important is the identity that the memory creates, and the function of that memory in creating history. Who we think we are determines how we act” (Davies, ‘History’, 20). So too Blenkinsopp: “Memories are... communicable and, once communicated, can become part of the collective unconscious of a society, an ingredient, no doubt the central ingredient, of the tradition by which it understands itself and expresses its identity... We live by necessity out of the past. The past recalled impels to action in the present” (Joseph Blenkinsopp, ‘Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel’, *BTB* 27 (1997): 76-82 (77, 78)).

continuities and discontinuities of reading the past. Mnemohistory is not the opposite of history, but rather is one of its branches or subdisciplines, such as intellectual history, social history, the history of mentalities, or the history of ideas. ...Mnemohistory is reception theory applied to history.⁴²

If we apply Assmann's concept to our present enquiry, one line of historical investigation might be to explore the manner in which ancient Israel "constantly fashion[ed] and refashion[ed] its identity"⁴³ through the stories it chose to remember. In this respect, Israel's sacred writings, the nation's received tradition, are viewed as the authoritative account of the nation's collective memory⁴⁴ and the primary source for this task, which, according to Assmann, may be legitimately referred to as a form of historiography. The results of such an enquiry, one could assume, would be invaluable for other lines of historical research. For example, Israel's testimony to its past would provide one story, no doubt among others, by which the archaeologist might interpret his or her findings. Likewise, one could see the value of this pursuit in offering a coherent narrative for those seeking to compare Israel's mnemohistory with those of its ANE neighbours. In short, this avenue of historical investigation appears to be indispensable. For Barr, Assmann's concept offers a possible avenue by means of which his "concept of story can perhaps be seen as belonging to history rather than contrasting with it."⁴⁵ While Barr's concept of 'story' is not identical to how we have developed it, we likewise find Assmann's concept of 'mnemohistory' helpful and adopt this as a positive way forward.

We are now at a place where we can make some definitive statements with respect to the focus of our enquiry, namely, the relationship between 'Israel's scriptures', the

⁴² Cf. Assmann, *Moses*, 8-9.

⁴³ Davies, 'History', 21.

⁴⁴ We explore the concept of canon in §3.2 'Story and Theological Studies' and the formation of the canon in §4 'The Making of Israel's Story'.

⁴⁵ Barr, *Concept*, 354.

‘story of Israel’, and the ‘history of Israel’. Drawing once again from the analogy of the courtroom, we may liken the various writings included within Israel’s scriptures, which exist in a variety of genres and as the result of the contributions of various authors/compiler/redactors over an extended period of time, to the various evidence supplied before the court. Some of the evidence is in narrative form, but there are also poems, hymns, proverbs and prophetic oracles where a storyline may need to be inferred.⁴⁶ Just as the lawyer reconstructs a ‘meta-story’ to account for the events having taken place, the biblical historian reconstructs a ‘meta-story’ from the evidence in this corpus that might thus be termed ‘Israel’s story’. While we must give further treatment to this in the chapters to follow, we affirm at this point the suggestions of both Wright and Barr that a broad narrative outline unifies these writings, but clarify this by insisting that it is essential to distinguish this perceived narrative from the writings themselves. In some writings this underlying narrative may be considered to be explicit, in others it may be implied, but in outlining the plot of this narrative the biblical historian is inevitably interpreting the data and *creating* the resulting narrative. Thus, the term ‘story of Israel’ is not synonymous with ‘Israel’s scriptures’, but is a construct of the supposed unifying narrative of these writings. As such, we recognise the potential for other versions of ‘Israel’s story’. It should be clear that this is primarily a literary task, which reiterates the importance of literary studies for historical enquiry.⁴⁷

We may also relate Israel’s scriptures to the ‘history of Israel’ by restating that these writings represent the ‘past as remembered’. Israel’s sacred traditions are the

⁴⁶ E.g., in a similar way that significance is attributed to exhibits in the courtroom scenario.

⁴⁷ Though some earlier literary critics sought to distance themselves from any interest in historiography, more recently historians of ancient Israel such as Philips Long are embracing literary criticism with this very intention.

essential data for analysing Israel's mnemohistory, to use Assmann's term. This observation allows us likewise to clarify the relationship between 'Israel's story' and the 'history of Israel'. In identifying and outlining 'Israel's story', the biblical historian, with Israel's scriptures in hand, "surveys the story-lines of tradition, the webs of intertextuality, the diachronic continuities and discontinuities of reading the past",⁴⁸ in short, attempts to identify the underlying narrative in Israel's mnemohistory. While, as already noted, this is primarily a literary task, it is nonetheless also an historical one. 'Israel's story' therefore reflects Israel's mnemohistory and is thus to be considered a legitimate form of historiography in its own right. It is by no means the only form of historiography with respect to ancient Israel, but if stories are integral to how people groups view their place in the world, such an endeavour is essential to other lines of historical enquiry and offer potential benefits to literary and theological endeavours, and perhaps also other disciplines as well.⁴⁹ For our own thesis this is particularly true, for it appears that the Synoptic Gospel writers were concerned to present Jesus in terms of the received tradition of Israel's past, that is, as articulated in Israel's scriptures, rather than some other historical reconstruction.

⁴⁸ Assmann, *Moses*, 8-9.

⁴⁹ E.g., Bartholomew laments: "There is our view, far too little energy directed towards telling the biblical story as a grand narrative. In practical theology, missiology and ethics there is a growing chorus of voices calling for such a reading of the Bible, and we think that an answer to that call is long overdue in biblical theology" (Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, 'Story and Biblical Theology', in Craig Bartholomew et al. (eds.), *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics, Vol. 5; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 144-71 (168)).

§3.2 Story and Theological Studies

The burden of this present sub-chapter is the identification of an adequate doctrine of scripture that can function as a suitable frame of reference for the concept of ‘story’ under investigation in this thesis and which, in particular, brings clarity to the relationship between ‘canon’, ‘story’ and the notion of ‘revelation’. We commence our enquiry by observing the tension between evangelical and neo-orthodox views during the twentieth century on the relationship between ‘scripture’ and ‘revelation’ with a view to highlighting this particular aspect within the ensuing discussion. Subsequently, we examine and compare the place of scripture in the theological method of Stanley J. Grenz and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, two contemporary postconservative scholars with contrasting views with respect to their doctrine of scripture.

One issue that has polarised advocates from neo-evangelical and neo-orthodox persuasions during the twentieth century and which continues to be a source of contention in evangelical circles today concerns the relationship between ‘scripture’ and ‘revelation.’ The issue centres on the nature of revelation itself: Is divine revelation propositional or personal? Neo-evangelicals tend to view scripture *as* revelation, where revelation is preserved in scripture in the form of propositional statements about God. The neo-orthodox view, by way of contrast, denies that revelation is propositional and insists rather that revelation is a personal encounter between God and the individual. From this perspective scripture is seen as a medium for revelation – revelation occurs *through* scripture.

Propositionalists, such as Carl F.H. Henry, the founding spokesperson of twentieth-century evangelicalism, see a one-to-one relationship between the character of YHWH in the biblical text and the ontological reality of God. It is said that scripture preserves and therefore communicates the revelation of God himself, not only as a means of personal encounter, but also of providing information about God.¹

Conversely, Karl Barth, the leading proponent of twentieth-century neo-orthodoxy, champions the view of relational revelation, and views scripture as a witness to the reality of revelation, but not revelation itself. One does not, for example, encounter YHWH in the text; rather, scripture testifies that revelation has taken place, and is a vehicle for future revelation, something that occurs between God and the individual by way of a personal encounter.²

The issue is of particular import in evangelical circles where the influence of Barthian neo-orthodoxy and Lindbeck's post-liberalism may be seen in the emerging postconservatism of so-called 'left wing' evangelicals.³ Postconservatives operate under the conviction that neo-evangelicalism, with its roots in early twentieth-century fundamentalism, which itself was greatly influenced by late nineteenth and

¹ Carl F.H. Henry, *God, Revelation and Authority* Vol. III (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1999). Cf. Henry's tenth thesis: "God's revelation is rational communication conveyed in intelligible ideas and meaningful words, that is, in conceptual-verbal form" (248). For Henry, "Revelation is that activity of the supernatural God whereby he communicates information essential for man's present and future destiny" (457). Of Scripture, Henry affirms, "The inspired Scriptures contain a body of divinely given information actually expressed or capable of being expressed in propositions. In brief, the Bible is a propositional revelation of the unchanging truth of God" (457). For Henry "a proposition is a verbal statement that is either true or false; it is a rational declaration capable of being believed, doubted or denied" (456).

² Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I/1, trans. Geoffrey Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975). In §4 of this volume, Barth distinguishes between the three-fold form of the Word of God, as the Word proclaimed, the Word written, and the Word revealed. For Barth, the term 'revelation' can only rightly be reserved for Jesus himself, who through the gracious act of God is "the Word made flesh," "God with us" (117-119). The church's proclamation and scripture have a necessary but secondary role of witness to revelation, and cannot be identified with revelation itself. Concerning scripture, Barth declares firmly, the Bible "is not in itself and as such God's past revelation... The Bible, speaking to us and heard by us as God's Word, bears witness to past revelation" (111).

³ Cf. Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Left: Encountering Postconservative Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1997; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998).

early twentieth-century Princeton theologians such as B.B. Warfield, unwittingly embraced the epistemological assumptions of the Enlightenment in formulating a doctrine of scripture. In particular, it is suggested that the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, understood as a necessary and logical corollary of the doctrine of inspiration, arose out of a concern to identify in scripture a scientifically sound foundation for its theology. Confronted with the liberalisation of the Christian faith, conservatives, in seeking to maintain the *sola scriptura* principle of the Reformation for the modern age, sought to demonstrate the authority of scripture by employing the rationalistic and empirical tools of the modern period. One must first substantiate the authority and reliability of one's primary sources, in this case, scripture. For postconservatives, however, the postmodern critique of the modernist epistemology is just as damning against the rationalistic assumptions undergirding propositionalism. From their perspective the new climate requires a review of how one formulates the doctrine of scripture.

Scripture as the primary instrumentality of the Spirit: The place of scripture in the theological method of Stanley J. Grenz.

Stanley J. Grenz is one such postconservative, who up until his recent untimely death, not only offered a critique of the propositionalist position, but also proposed a new way forward.⁴ Grenz's postfoundationalist theology seeks to renew the centre of neo-evangelicalism by advocating that scripture be understood as the Spirit-

⁴ A sample of Grenz's position may be obtained from four representative publications: Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology: A Fresh Agenda for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993); *idem*, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); *idem*, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000); and a jointly authored book, Stanley J. Grenz and John R. Franke, *Beyond Foundationalism: Shaping Theology in a Postmodern Context* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2001).

illuminated Word to the believing community.⁵ Whether Grenz is correct or not in his claim to be representing the historical centre of evangelicalism is of no consequence to our present enquiry;⁶ our interest lies in the place that Grenz assigns scripture in his postfoundationalist theology.

Dissatisfied with correspondence theory, Grenz opts for coherentism in his quest to find an alternative epistemology within which to discuss his theology. Coherence theory rejects the primacy of certain beliefs over others, but rather insists that “beliefs are interdependent, each belief being supported by its connection to its neighbors and ultimately to the whole.”⁷ Grenz identifies two features of coherence theory that will be determinative in his theological method: a shift from “the part to the whole” and from “the actual to the ideal.”⁸ However, it is coherentism coupled with Ludwig Wittgenstein’s concept of ‘language games’ that completes Grenz’s epistemology for his postfoundational theology.⁹ Grenz asserts, “according to Wittgenstein, meaning and truth are not related – at least not directly or primarily – to an external world of ‘facts’ waiting to be apprehended. Instead, they are an internal function of language.”¹⁰ This marks for Grenz a break with metaphysical realism. Since all truth statements are relative to their context, that is, they are participants within a specific ‘language game,’ they, like language, can only ever be

⁵ Cf. Grenz, *Renewing*, 168-90.

⁶ Cf. Carson’s assessment: “Almost every time Grenz offers historical judgements, they are deeply tendentious, in need of serious qualification, or simply mistaken” (D.A. Carson, ‘Domesticating the Gospel: A review of Grenz’s *Renewing the Center*’, in Millard J. Erickson et al. (eds.), *Reclaiming the Center: Confronting Evangelical Accommodation in Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 33-55 (43)).

⁷ Grenz, *Renewing*, 191.

⁸ Grenz, *Renewing*, 193.

⁹ Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 3rd ed., 1967).

¹⁰ Grenz, *Renewing*, 195.

a social phenomenon, which for Grenz necessarily entails alienation from the world-as-it-really-is.¹¹

Grenz explains his understanding of the new theological agenda through dialogue with Wolfhart Pannenberg and George Lindbeck. Grenz applauds Pannenberg's coherentist methodology, which seeks to correlate all knowledge, both within and outside the church, in conformity to the knowledge of God, and Pannenberg's view that only at the *eschaton* will the purposes of God in creation be fully revealed in Christ, but he rejects Pannenberg's commitment to metaphysical realism.¹² In Lindbeck, however, Grenz finds an example of coherence theory with a "Wittgensteinian twist."¹³ For Lindbeck, doctrines are like rules of grammar, providing norms for living in the world, and as such have a 'regulative' function for the church.¹⁴ They do not, however, make statements about the world itself. Thus Grenz asserts:

[Doctrines] do not make 'first order' truth claims; they do not assert something objective about reality. Instead, like rules of grammar, they are second-order assertions. This suggests that church doctrines are primarily rules for speech about God, rather than actual assertions about the divine reality.¹⁵

Grenz welcomes the 'turn to community' in Lindbeck's proposal, and seeks to apply this to a particular community, one facilitated by the gospel, namely, the community of those whom the God of the Bible has encountered through Jesus Christ.¹⁶ For

¹¹ Thus for Grenz: "Rather than assertions of final truth or truth in any ultimate sense, all our utterances can *only* be deemed 'true' within the context in which they are spoken" (Grenz, *Renewing*, 195; emphasis mine).

¹² Grenz, *Renewing*, 197-98. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* Vol. I, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

¹³ Grenz, *Renewing*, 198. Cf. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PN: Westminster, 1984).

¹⁴ Lindbeck, *Nature*, 18.

¹⁵ Grenz, *Renewing*, 199.

¹⁶ Grenz, *Renewing*, 202.

Grenz, “the specifically Christian experience-facilitating interpretative framework, arising as it does out of the biblical gospel narrative, is ‘basic’ for Christian theology,”¹⁷ and thus he defines Christian theology as the community’s quest to “understand, clarify, and delineate”¹⁸ its own interpretative framework.

Three principal sources – scripture, tradition, and culture – inform the theologian in this endeavour, or to be more specific, it is the Spirit speaking through these sources. Of the three, Grenz grants primacy to the Bible as “the instrumentality of the Spirit.”¹⁹ Rejecting the position of Henry in favour of a view similar to that espoused by Barth,²⁰ Grenz argues that ‘revelation’ is to be equated with the “Spirit-illuminated Bible.”²¹ For Grenz, the Bible might be spoken of as revelation in a ‘derivative’ sense, in that it is “the witness to the historical self-disclosure of God and the record of that revelation,”²² or in a ‘functional’ sense, in that it becomes the word of God to us when illuminated by the Spirit, or finally in a ‘mediate’ sense, in that it “mediates to us the proper understanding of God’s essence,”²³ but he insists that the Bible itself is not revelation as such.²⁴ Recalling the statement from the *Westminster Confession*, Grenz affirms, “The Supreme Judge... can be no other than the *Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture*.”²⁵ It is not the Bible itself that is authoritative, insists Grenz, but only the Spirit-energised Bible. This, he believes, is the inference of θεόπνευστος in 2 Tim 3:16-17, and claims, “The early church, in

¹⁷ Grenz, *Renewing*, 203.

¹⁸ Grenz, *Renewing*, 203.

¹⁹ Grenz, *Renewing*, 207.

²⁰ Grenz is confident that his *communitarian* focus enables him to avoid the charge of subjectivism that the Barthian view invites in linking revelation with human reception. Cf. Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 67-8; Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20th-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, IL: 1992), 75-7.

²¹ Grenz, *Theology*, 396.

²² Grenz, *Theology*, 396.

²³ Grenz, *Theology*, 397.

²⁴ Grenz, *Theology*, 394.

²⁵ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1.10, cited in Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 64-5; emphasis mine.

short, came to confess the authority of scripture because the early believers experienced the power and truth of the Spirit of God through these writings.”²⁶ Thus for Grenz, illumination precedes inspiration, the latter being attributed to the sacred writings as a consequence of the former.

However, the question remains: what is the ‘biblical message’ the Spirit speaks and how does this relate to the text itself? Grenz seeks to clarify his position by adopting the language of speech-act theorist J.L. Austin.²⁷ When Grenz suggests the Spirit speaks through the Bible, he has in mind not a ‘locutionary act’ but an ‘illocutionary act.’²⁸ Moreover, he does not equate the Spirit speaking with the language of biblical text, nor does he equate the illocutionary act of the Spirit with the illocutionary act of the text. Rather, Grenz argues that the ‘Spirit speaking’ is an act contemporaneous with the reading of the text.

The Bible is the instrumentality of the Spirit in that the Spirit appropriates the biblical text so as to speak to us today. Through Scripture the Spirit performs the illocutionary act of addressing us.²⁹

How does this speech relate to the illocutionary act in the text itself? Grenz insists the Spirit’s speech is not independent of “original meaning of the text,” but nor is the Spirit’s speech restricted to that meaning. In agreement with Paul Ricoeur, he insists

²⁶ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 65-6.

²⁷ Cf. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (New York, NY: OUP, 2nd ed., 1975). Austin is the pioneer of speech-act theory.

²⁸ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 73. Austin identifies three senses “in which to say something is to do something”: “We perform a *locutionary act*, which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference... Second, ...we also perform *illocutionary acts* such as informing, ordering, warning, undertaking, etc., ...Thirdly, we may also perform *perlocutionary acts*: what we bring about or achieve *by* saying something, such as convincing, persuading, deterring, and even, say, surprising or misleading” (Austin, *Words*, 109).

²⁹ Grenz, *Renewing*, 207.

that once crafted, the text has “a life of its own,” open to new potentialities.³⁰ Thus, exegesis will never “exhaust the Spirit’s speaking to us through the text.”³¹ In appropriating the biblical text, the Spirit speaks afresh the biblical message to the contemporary Christian community.

A brief reflection on the place of scripture in Grenz’s theological method

Grenz is attracted to the theological method of Lindbeck, not only for his communitarian turn, but because he sees in Lindbeck’s proposal a break from both correspondence theory and metaphysical realism.³² This move has resulting challenges of its own, and Grenz has been unable to sufficiently distance his view from that of Lindbeck to avoid the same criticism Lindbeck has received over his metaphysical non-realism.³³ Indeed, Grenz raises this issue himself:

Does theology speak about anything objective, or does it content itself with merely articulating the interpretive framework of a specific religious tradition.... Does the move beyond foundationalism entail a move away from metaphysical realism?³⁴

Grenz, however, dismisses this line of enquiry as “both improper and ultimately unhelpful.”³⁵ He continues: “The simple fact is, we do not inhabit the ‘world-in-itself’; instead, we live in a linguistic world of our own making.”³⁶ However, while

³⁰ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 74. Cf. Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), 145-164.

³¹ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 74.

³² Grenz, *Renewing*, 198.

³³ So A.B. Caneday, ‘Is Theological Truth Functional or Propositional? Postconservatism’s use of language games and speech-act theory’, in Erickson et al., *Reclaiming*, 137-159 (151). With respect to Lindbeck’s theological method, McGrath observes: “[T]here is a studied evasion of the central question of revelation – in other words, whether the Christian idiom, articulated in scripture and hence in the Christian tradition, originates from accumulated human insight, or from the self-disclosure of God in the Christ-event” (Alister E. McGrath, *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundation of Doctrinal Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 1997, c 1990), 28). See also Carson, ‘Domesticating the Gospel’, 50, n. 13.

³⁴ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 51-2.

³⁵ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 52.

³⁶ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 53.

unable to speak definitively about the world-as-it-is, Grenz believes the Christian community can speak with a degree of objectivity about the world-as-it-will-be.

Thus, modifying Pannenberg's eschatological realism so that it is entirely future in orientation, Grenz states:

Because what God wills is not a present but a future reality (e.g., Isa. 65:17-19; Rev. 21:5), the 'objectivity of the world' about which we can truly speak is an objectivity of a *future*, eschatological world. And because this future reality is God's determined will for creation, as that which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:26-28) it is far more real – more objectively real – than the present world, which is even now passing away (1 Cor. 7:31).³⁷

And how does the believing community access this knowledge? Grenz appeals to the Spirit's role in constructing this eschatological world through the medium of the Bible: "This eschatological realm breaks into the here and now as the Holy Spirit fashions our present in light of God's future."³⁸

What emerges in Grenz's thought is an uneasy coalition between his implied present non-realism, his future eschatological realism, and his claim that the Spirit is currently creating an eschatological world.³⁹ In particular, it appears that the 'Spirit' is immune to Grenz's non-realist critique. How are we to understand Grenz when he asserts that the "Spirit speaks to us today,"⁴⁰ or that "the Spirit's task is to bring into being a new community"?⁴¹ Who, exactly, is the 'Spirit'? It appears as if Grenz assumes the 'Spirit' to be a metaphysical reality, although his metaphysical non-realism argues against this. If pressed, his epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions suggest one must affirm the 'Spirit,' and for that matter the 'future

³⁷ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 53; emphasis original.

³⁸ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 272.

³⁹ For a similar observation see Stephen J. Wellum, 'Postconservatism, Biblical Authority, and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Theology: A Critical Analysis', in Erickson et al., *Reclaiming*, 161-197 (188).

⁴⁰ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 75.

⁴¹ Grenz and Franke, *Beyond*, 79.

eschatological world,' to be merely a social construct. When applied consistently, Grenz's communitarian turn results in a form of communitarian existentialism.

Although Grenz identifies scripture as a primary source for theology, its role is very much chastened within his enterprise. Indeed, by arguing for a distinction between the illocutionary act of the Spirit and the illocutionary act of the text, Grenz effectively places the Spirit's speech outside of the canon. As Caneday observes:

Though they [Grenz and Franke] regard these *inaccessible* speech-acts of the Spirit to be "closely bound to the text," the Spirit's world construction does not reside in the text. This is so because the biblical text is not the Spirit's creative speech itself; Scripture is just the instrumentality of the Spirit's creative speech. So it is outside Scripture that "the Spirit performs the perlocutionary act of creating *world*." Thus, however closely linked the Spirit's present inaccessible speaking may be with Scripture, Grenz and Franke locate the Spirit's present speaking outside the canon.⁴²

Whereas Grenz charges neo-evangelicalism with an improper emphasis upon inspiration of scripture at the expense of illumination, his own construal makes inspiration virtually redundant. Moreover, how is it possible for one to distinguish the Spirit's speech from what the community hears? Though Grenz claims that ultimate authority resides with the Spirit speaking through the biblical text, in practice, this seems indistinguishable from what the community says they heard the Spirit speak.⁴³ More to the point, how does one confirm or disprove such a claim? As welcome as Grenz's emphasis upon the work of the Spirit may be, in the end it seems inescapable that the authority that once resided with scripture now resides with the experiential reality of the contemporary Christian community.

Consequently, we must judge Grenz's doctrine of scripture to be inadequate for our

⁴² Caneday, 'Theological Truth', 155; emphasis original.

⁴³ Wellum asks, "[H]ow, then, does one determine what the Spirit is actually speaking, except in the light of the *subjectivity* of the local community's hearing the Spirit's voice?" (Wellum, 'Postconservatism', 191).

purposes and find ourselves in agreement with Caneday that Kevin J. Vanhoozer provides a viable alternative.⁴⁴

Scripture as a divine communicative act: The place of scripture in the theological method of Kevin J. Vanhoozer.

Vanhoozer concurs with Grenz on the need for a postfoundationalist theology, but unlike Grenz, Vanhoozer does not view Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic approach as the best way forward.⁴⁵ Rather, Lindbeck serves as a foil for his own proposal – a canonical-linguistic approach – that aims to situate the authority of the canonical writings above that of the church's reading of them.⁴⁶ As with Grenz, Vanhoozer's bibliology is tightly intertwined with his overall theological method. Of his own canonical-linguistic approach, Vanhoozer states:

One of its fundamental theses is that *sola scriptura* refers not to an abstract principle but to *concrete theological practice*: a *performance* practice, namely the practice of corresponding in one's speech and action to the word of God. The supreme *norm* for church practice is Scripture itself: not Scripture as used by the church but Scripture as used by God, even, or perhaps especially, when such use is *over against* the church... Canonical-linguistic theology attends both to the drama *in* the text – what God is doing in the world through Christ – and to the drama that continues in the church as God uses Scripture to address, edify, and confront its readers.⁴⁷

To achieve his goal, Vanhoozer recruits and adapts von Balthasar's drama metaphor, noting that Christian theology is dramatic both in content (i.e., the acts and words of God in creation and redemption) and in nature (i.e., theology resembles the role of a

⁴⁴ Caneday, 'Theological Truth', 156.

⁴⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Theology* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2005), 95-99, 292-93.

⁴⁶ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 16-17, 98-99.

⁴⁷ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 16-17; emphasis original.

dramaturge providing ‘stage’ directions for how to live out the gospel).⁴⁸ To fill out the theatrical metaphor as employed by Vanhoozer: God is the playwright and primary actor; the canon functions as the script that witnesses to the drama of God; the contemporary church is the active audience, invited to participate in the ongoing drama; and the theologian is the dramaturge ensuring the appropriateness of the church’s speech and action. God’s activity in creation and redemption may be depicted in terms of a five-act drama: Act 1: Creation; Act 2: Israel; Act 3: Jesus; Act 4: Church; and Act 5: Consummation.⁴⁹ For Vanhoozer, “[t]he church lives at present between the definitive event of Jesus and the concluding event of the eschaton, poised between memory and hope.”⁵⁰

What does it mean for scripture to be understood as script? For Vanhoozer, scripture not only describes the theo-drama, but also is itself caught up in this drama. “The Bible is both the authoritative version of the drama of redemption and the authoritative script for the church’s ongoing life.”⁵¹ As script, scripture testifies to the divine economy of salvation, and indeed is the only authoritative version of God’s activity in the world. Moreover, as script, scripture is the authoritative manuscript by which the church participates in the theo-drama – the church of every age and location is called to live out the script within the socio-political environment in which it finds itself. A competent or fitting performance necessitates faithful

⁴⁸ Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, 4 Vols. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius, 1988-94). For a brief historical sketch of the emergence of narrative or drama in theological methodologies see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 62-7. For Vanhoozer’s preference for drama as a metaphor over narrative or story see Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 48-9.

⁴⁹ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 2-3. Compare with Wright, *NTPG*, 141-42; Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 27.

⁵⁰ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 3.

⁵¹ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 115.

reading of the script, that is, it requires an appropriate exegetical method (*scientia*) and sound judgement (*sapientia*) so as know how best to improvise the script for a particular cultural setting. As script, therefore, scripture is the divine mechanism for exercising authority over the church.

The canon is the locus for God's communicative action – past, present, and future – the divinely approved means by which God exercises his authority in, and over, the church. It is primarily in the church's reading of Scripture that the risen Christ, through his Spirit, exercises his lordship over the church.⁵²

For Vanhoozer, God engages with his church through scripture, which is itself a divine communicative act. But what does it mean for scripture to be a 'divine communicative act', and how does this differ from the more problematic expression that 'scripture is the word of God'?

Importantly, Vanhoozer suggests a path through the scripture/revelation impasse, an alternative to following either Henry or Barth. For Vanhoozer, *both* propositional revelation and relational revelation are inadequate concepts for representing what God does in and through scripture. He believes the long-standing debate revolves around a false disjunction between 'God saying' and 'God doing' when in actuality both are present in the act of communication.

God is a speaking God and propositions are ingredients in what people *do* with words; conversely, we come to know persons largely through their communicative action. In short: God's communicative acts are both historical/personal and propositional/verbal.⁵³

For Vanhoozer, the issue is not whether revelation is propositional or personal, but that 'revelation' is only a small aspect of what takes place in communication.

⁵² Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 124.

⁵³ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 276.

Strictly speaking, revelation occurs only where there is a dispelling of ignorance or a disclosing of something previously hidden. [However, communication] can refer to the act, the content, *or* the effect of someone's discourse... Communicative action refers to all the things we do with language vis-à-vis others: greeting, questioning, promising, commanding, and, yes, asserting or revealing.⁵⁴

Vanhoozer's "way forward... is to move beyond the narrow equation of the Bible as God's word with the concept of propositional revelation" in favour of the view that sees scripture as "[d]ivine communicative action."⁵⁵ As God's 'communicative act', scripture includes the notion of revelation, but embraces much more. "God speaks in and through human words, not only to reveal but to promise, exhort, command, warn, comfort, predict, lament, even plead."⁵⁶

The basic insight is that the Bible is not simply a deposit of revelation but one of God's "mighty acts" – a mighty *communicative* act, to be exact. Scripture has a role – a speaking, acting part – in the drama of redemption precisely as divine discourse. *Scripture not only conveys the content of the gospel but is itself caught up in the economy of the gospel, as the means by which God draws others into his communicative action.*⁵⁷

As with Grenz, Vanhoozer finds the explicative value of speech-act theory helpful, only there are important differences with his application of the theory. The argument in speech-act theory is that communicants *do* things with words; all communication is a form of action. By way of illustration, Vanhoozer explains that a promise not only consists of content that might be expressed in propositional terms, but is also a means by which one communicant commits personally to another regarding a future course of action. "Promising is a way of *doing* something in *saying* something."⁵⁸

Vanhoozer avers: both propositional content and personal encounter are basic to all

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 276-77.

⁵⁵ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 277; emphasis original.

⁵⁶ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 47.

⁵⁷ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 48; emphasis original.

⁵⁸ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 64.

communication. “Language is not simply a tool for information processing but a rich medium of communicative action and personal interaction.”⁵⁹

The heart of communication for Vanhoozer is the illocutionary act, what one is saying/doing *in* speaking or writing.⁶⁰ The term ‘communication’ may connote either the process of communicating, the illocution, or the completed act, the illocution and perlocution, but every communicative act must have at its centre an illocutionary act.⁶¹ This is where meaning is found, not in the locution, the actual words, nor in the effects upon the hearer/reader, the perlocution, but in the speaker’s or author’s use of the locution. Has communication taken place if the desired perlocution has not materialised? Vanhoozer is content to consider communication as having occurred when the recipient *understands* the illocutionary force of speech or action, whether or not the recipient responds as intended.

Furthermore, Vanhoozer suggests that what occurs at the micro level of the individual sentence also occurs similarly at the macro-level of genre and canon. Indeed, he argues, “some of the author’s illocutionary intentions come to light only at the level of the literary whole.”⁶² Genres, for example, as social conventions provide a common literary context within which persons can interrelate. Each biblical genre, it might be said, has a characteristic illocutionary force, which is employed when an author adopts that particular literary type.⁶³ Moreover, Vanhoozer believes there are

⁵⁹ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 47; emphasis original.

⁶⁰ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 182-83. Cf. William P. Alston, *Illocutionary Acts and Sentence Meaning* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000).

⁶¹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 195.

⁶² Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 193.

⁶³ E.g., “wisdom (‘commending the way’), [and] apocalyptic (‘encouraging endurance’)” (Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 193).

higher-level illocutionary forces that emerge at the canonical stage, for insistence, ‘covenanting’. As such, he embraces Wolterstorff’s concept of ‘double agency discourse’ whereby God appropriates the language of the human biblical authors.⁶⁴

For Vanhoozer, “God is doing providential things in his Scripture acts. The divine intention does not contravene but supervenes on the intentions of the human authors.”⁶⁵ Contra Grenz, the Spirit’s speaking *is* to be equated with the locutions and illocutions of the biblical text. The Spirit-inspired text *is* God’s communicative act. Moreover, the Spirit brings the divine communicative act to fruition, that is, its perlocutionary effect. “The Spirit is nothing less than the *efficacy* of the Word.”⁶⁶ Vanhoozer clarifies the relationship between the canon and the Spirit’s speech, and in doing so brings a helpful corrective to Grenz’s proposal.⁶⁷ “The Spirit speaks in and through Scripture precisely by rendering its illocutions at the sentential, generic and canonic levels perlocutionarily efficacious.”⁶⁸

As a divine ‘communicative act’, the canon might be analysed in terms of speech-act theory, and the Henry – Barth impasse reframed in light of it. From this vantage point, Vanhoozer judges:

Barth tends to emphasize the necessity of the interlocutionary and perlocutionary dimensions of revelation (viz. the Spirit’s illumination of readers in the present), whereas evangelicals tend to emphasize its locutionary and illocutionary dimensions (viz. the Spirit’s inspirations of the authors in the past)... The Bible *is* the word of God insofar as its inspired witnesses – which is to say the

⁶⁴ Cf. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim that God Speaks* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995).

⁶⁵ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 194.

⁶⁶ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 199; emphasis original.

⁶⁷ Vanhoozer believes Grenz has misappropriated speech-act theory by identifying the ‘Spirit speaking’ as an illocutionary act. Vanhoozer avers, “‘speaking’ per se is not an illocutionary act. Illocutionary acts have to do with what is done *in* speaking” (Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 198).

⁶⁸ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 200.

inspired locutions and illocutions – really do present Jesus Christ. Yet the Bible also *becomes* the word of God when its illumined readers receive and grasp the subject matter by grace through faith, which is to say, when the Spirit enables what we might call illocutionary uptake and perlocutionary efficacy. The full measure of Scripture as a communicative act of God, then, involves the-Spirit-testifying-about-Jesus-through-Scripture-to-the-church.⁶⁹

By viewing the canon as a divine communicative act and applying the insights of speech-act theory, Vanhoozer believes he has brought together two competing lines of thought into a workable compromise. Both conservative evangelicals and Barth have something important to contribute to his theological endeavour, though neither without compromise. But in affirming scripture as a divine communicative act, and the norm for the Christian community, is Vanhoozer once more merely laying the canon as a sturdy base for a foundationalist theology? He does not believe so.

The testimony of scripture, Vanhoozer argues, is polyphonic:

The theo-dramatic script is a rich dialogue between various genres that sometimes complement, sometimes contrast with one another, rather than a stable and static monologue that endorses a single system of propositions.⁷⁰

For Vanhoozer, each genre is governed by its own rules and engages with reality in its own distinct and creative way, thus inviting the reader to *experience* the world from a particular perspective. Theological truth, therefore, emerges through the resulting dialogue of the independent voices that make up the canonical witness. Vanhoozer endorses a moderate realism, which he calls ‘aspectival realism’, that both affirms the independent reality of the theo-drama and insists that each of the canonical forms allows access, if only partial, to certain *aspects* of that reality.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ‘A Person of the Book? Barth on Biblical Authority and Interpretation’, in Sung Wok Chung (ed.), *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology: Convergences and Divergences*, (Milton Keynes, Bucks: Paternoster; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 26-59 (57); emphasis original.

⁷⁰ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 287.

⁷¹ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 289.

Hence, Vanhoozer's "[p]ostconservative theology accepts the various literary forms that comprise Scripture as so many distinct and irreducible *world views*. No one genre or world view is 'foundational'; all are necessary in order adequately to render the gospel."⁷²

Vanhoozer does not reject correspondence theory outright, as does Grenz, but employs it with the proviso that there is never exact equivalence between the mind's idea of an object and the object itself. "[C]omplete equivalence between language and world, formulation and fact [is an] impossible ideal."⁷³ But this need not imply there is no correspondence at all. Rather, Vanhoozer suggests that even though one cannot know 'absolutely', one can gain 'adequate' knowledge that is 'sufficient' or 'good enough.' Borrowing from cartography, Vanhoozer suggests the appropriate metaphor for his epistemology to be that of 'following maps.'

Scripture is neither a textbook of propositional truths that serves as the foundation for knowledge nor a narrative that relies on its position in the church's web of belief for its meaning and truth. Scripture is rather a canonical *atlas*: a collection of maps that variously render the way, the truth, and the life.⁷⁴

Maps do not present the world-as-it-is, but provide an 'interpretative framework' for understanding the world as it is perceived.⁷⁵ As a collection of maps, an atlas provides a variety of perspectives on a particular theme or topic, where each map is vital for one's overall understanding. Viewing the canon as an atlas both affirms the "irreducible plurality of Scripture"⁷⁶ (i.e., each canonical voice is essential), and implies that scripture, like a road atlas for example, provides directions for how and where to walk. For Vanhoozer, scripture, and "just this canonically bounded

⁷² Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 285.

⁷³ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 286.

⁷⁴ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 294; emphasis original.

⁷⁵ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 296.

⁷⁶ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 295.

dialogue,” communicates “enough” insight both to “understand the main thrust” of the theo-drama and to “participate fittingly in it.”⁷⁷

A brief reflection on the place of scripture in Vanhoozer’s theological method

While both Vanhoozer and Grenz agree upon the need for a postfoundationalist theology, our brief examination of their respective theological methods suggests that the role of scripture finds clearer expression within Vanhoozer’s approach and as such provides a better frame of reference for our own inquiry. Appealing to the insights of speech-act theory, Vanhoozer argues that through the agency of the Spirit, whereby the intention of the Spirit supervened on that of the human authors, the triune God appropriated the canonical writings, and just these writings, as his very own speech-act. By identifying scripture as a ‘divine communicative act’, Vanhoozer’s canonical-linguistic approach reframes the ‘propositional’ versus ‘relational’ revelation debate between conservative evangelicalism and neo-orthodoxy, insisting that all communication, including revealing, which is only a part of what God is doing through scripture, is both propositional and relational.

Vanhoozer’s moderate realism argues for the metaphysical reality of the God of the Bible, while at the same time conceding that knowledge of the divine is always partial and provisional. Like a map, the various genres that make up the canon do not provide exact correspondence to this metaphysical reality, but rather offer an interpretative framework within which to perceive one aspect of that reality.

Adopting Vanhoozer’s drama metaphor and identification of the canon as script

⁷⁷ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 291.

allows us to view scripture as the authoritative *testimony* to the divine drama and also the divine instrument for equipping the people of God for appropriate participation in this drama.

Vanhoozer's insistence that scripture's testimony is polyphonic – the canon consists of a variety of literary forms, each with its own irreducible worldview – defies any privilege being granted to any one genre. This assertion requires that we justify and clarify our use of 'story' and particularly 'Israel's story' with respect to the scriptures. In Vanhoozer's theological method, scripture is identified as the *script* of the divine drama. Our use of 'story', therefore, refers to the *storyline or plot of the script* and we argue that the use of narrative is an appropriate genre for this task. It is not therefore the case that our use of 'story' privileges narrative within the canon at the expense of other genres. Story is merely employed as the most suitable genre for outlining the plot of the script, which, as has been noted, exists in various literary forms. In this sense, 'story' is a theological construct that best describes the storyline of the divine drama as articulated in the Christian scriptures. The expression 'Israel's story', therefore, attends specifically to the plot as it can be discerned within the Old Testament canon.

Vanhoozer develops his theological method with the Christian Bible in view. When he speaks of canon, for example, he has in mind both Old Testament and New Testament writings, and for him, the canon, in principle at least, is closed. However, our particular enquiry requires us to explore the nexus *between* the Old Testament and New Testament writings. Does Vanhoozer's drama metaphor assist us to

understand the production of the biblical canon itself?⁷⁸ If we apply Vanhoozer's methodology to the Old Testament alone, then we must likewise affirm that these writings functioned as the instrument of divine communication to Jews of the late second-temple period. Thus, in applying Vanhoozer's concept of script to the Old Testament writings we offer the following paraphrase of Vanhoozer's position:

*Israel's scriptures were the authoritative manuscript by which Israel participated in the theo-drama, where each generation was called to live out the script, as they had received it, within the socio-political environment it found itself.*⁷⁹ A competent or fitting performance necessitated faithful improvisation of the script for that particular historical-cultural setting. This observation provides a helpful perspective on the function of Israel's scriptures in late second-temple Judaism and provokes the question: To what extent are the New Testament writings an improvisation of Israel's scriptures in view of the Jesus event?

Before we can explore this line of thought however, we must first consider that a competent or fitting improvisation of the script assumes, as a basic premise, that texts are a viable means for communication. Evidently, there still remains for us then the need to outline a sufficiently versatile hermeneutic for the task ahead that, firstly, can account for the way texts of various genres and historical-cultural contexts may serve as a trustworthy medium for communication, and secondly, can accommodate the concept of story as we are developing it.

⁷⁸ Indeed, Vanhoozer suggests that this is the case, although he is yet to develop this line of thought (cf. Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 334, 388). See also the discussion on improvisation in §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'. This thesis seeks to contribute to this endeavour.

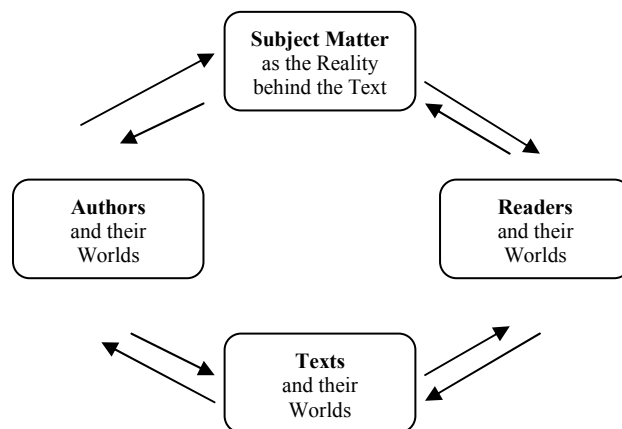
⁷⁹ Cf. Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 115.

§3.3 Story and Literary Studies

By this stage of our discussion it ought to be self-evident that attention to literary studies and to the interpretation of the biblical text is unavoidable. In the preceding two sub-chapters we have observed that both historical and theological lines of enquiry must engage with the biblical literature as their primary source – both Israel’s ‘remembered past’ and the ‘divine discourse’ are mediated via these multiform writings. Indeed, hermeneutics is basic to any form of enquiry.

According to Gadamer: “All understanding is interpretation, and all interpretation takes place in the medium of a language.”¹ But how reliable are texts as a means of communication? A sufficiently robust hermeneutic must be able to engage with the complex interrelationship between author, text, subject matter and reader. Oeming depicts this interrelationship as the hermeneutical square (see figure 1).²

Figure 1



¹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York, NY: Seabury, 1975), 350. Cf. Alexander S. Jensen, *Theological Hermeneutics* (SCM Core Text, London: SCM, 2007), 139, 208.

² Communication via texts involves four interrelated factors: “(1) The *author*, who aims to communicate an insight or experience from this world; (2) the *text*, which at least partially contains what the author intended to communicate; (3) the *reader*, initiates contact with the author and his world by dealing with the text and its world...; (4) the *subject matter*, which connects the author, text and reader” (Manfred Oeming, *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 7; emphasis original).

Importantly, the diagram illustrates that there is “no direct contact between author and recipient: understanding occurs indirectly through the medium of language.”³

With respect to the contemporary reading of biblical texts, the path to successful communication, already challenged by the historical, cultural and ideological ‘distance’ between the author’s world and that of the reader, is made all the more difficult due to its textual medium. Consequently, naïve realism, which assumes unrestricted access to the ‘world of the author’, is equally a deceptive epistemological stance in literary studies as we observed it to be in historical and theological studies. Jensen reflects:

Much of modern criticism of Christianity and religion in general is based on the presupposition that, if the foundational texts of a religion do not reflect ‘reality’ adequately, then they are worthless. At the same time, modern fundamentalism is based on the same presupposition. If the revered texts are to be true, they must describe objective reality accurately, and one must insist that they are absolutely reliable at the literal-historical level.⁴

Jensen’s observation highlights the influence that a reader’s epistemological assumptions have on one’s exegetical conclusions.⁵ It is apparent, therefore, that unless deliberate attention is given to the ideological or theological assumptions underpinning the reader’s hermeneutical method, then these presuppositions will inadvertently influence the resulting interpretation.⁶ Since there is no such thing as a value-free interpretation,⁷ a critically informed hermeneutic is essential to minimise

³ Oeming, *Hermeneutics*, 8.

⁴ Jensen, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 207-8.

⁵ A reader’s ideology contributes to his or her overall ‘preunderstanding’, which encapsulates all that the reader brings to the task of interpretation and is thus an essential aspect for critical reflection. In what Schleiermacher referred to as the ‘hermeneutical circle’, but is perhaps better described by Osborne as the ‘hermeneutical spiral’, a reader’s preunderstanding is under review each time he or she engages with a text thus altering the ‘entry point’ for each subsequent reading. Cf. Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 13-16, 155-57; William W. Klein et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas, TX: Word, rev. ed., 2004), 155; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2nd ed., 2006), 324.

⁶ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 32. Cf. Jensen, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 208.

⁷ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 33.

the distortive impact of the reader's ideological or theological presuppositions upon the process of interpretation.⁸

One critical issue to arise in twentieth-century biblical hermeneutics was the question concerning the locus of 'meaning': Is meaning to be found in the 'world of the author', the 'world of the text' or 'the world of the reader'?⁹ Interestingly, it is possible to trace a broad movement in biblical hermeneutics during the twentieth century where attention has shifted from the 'author's world' or the 'world behind the text' (where historical concerns predominated) to interest in the 'world within the text' itself (led by advances in literary theory) and more recently to the 'world in front of the text' or the 'world of the reader' (where ideological and sociological concerns have taken centre stage). In the process, the locus of meaning has been identified with the author, the text, and finally the reader respectively. At each stage in this general movement, responses have been varied, and at the beginning of the twenty-first century there is no consensus in view. The present scene is aptly summarised by Bartholomew:

The very possibility of determinate and true readings of texts has been called into question by much postmodern literary theory. Author, reader, text, and their interrelationships have come under fresh scrutiny, and a variety of positions have developed, particularly as the role of the reader in the construction of meaning has received fresh attention: "But this latter qualification – the enfranchisement of the viewer's perspective – is precisely the feature which introduces the subversive possibility that each term in the 'total situation' is radically unstable or indeterminate, a product of the beholder's gaze..." The result is that nowadays there is considerable disagreement over where to anchor textual meaning, if anywhere.¹⁰

⁸ Jensen, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 212.

⁹ A succinct sketch of the period appears in Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 20-35.

¹⁰ Craig G. Bartholomew, 'Postmodernity and Biblical Interpretation', *DTIB*, 600-7 (603-4). Bartholomew's quotation from Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader* (London: Methuen, 1987), has been abbreviated in the above citation.

Reader-centred approaches, which might be grouped under the broad umbrella of postmodern literary theories, have helpfully exposed the myth of the objective reader and brought welcomed attention to the role of the reader in the interpretative process.¹¹ However, more radical advocates have declared all texts to be indeterminate.¹² It is claimed that ‘meaning’ is not something that is to be discovered in the author’s intention, nor is it something that emerges as readers encounter the autonomous text, but rather, ‘meaning’ is something that readers create. In short: “[T]here is nothing ‘in’ the text.”¹³ The text is seen “merely as a template, in which the reader can find a playful and never-ending web of reference.”¹⁴ If this position accurately presents the state of affairs, then the capacity for the biblical texts to confront, guide and instruct their readers is severely undermined and our claim that Israel’s ‘story’ functioned authoritatively as the nation’s received tradition, indeed, as divine discourse, is hermeneutically untenable. It is essential therefore that we attend to the issue of hermeneutics.

We have already investigated and adopted Vanhoozer’s theological method and doctrine of scripture for their compatibility with the concept of ‘story’ being developed in this thesis. One potential advantage in continuing to dialogue with Vanhoozer is that, in response to the issues facing the theologian in the early twenty-first century, Vanhoozer explicitly integrates his hermeneutics with his theological method and doctrine of scripture. Hence, the elevation of scripture over the church’s

¹¹ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 328.

¹² E.g., Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore, MD: JHUP, 1976).

¹³ Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 31; commenting here on: Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: HUP, 1980).

¹⁴ Jensen, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 211.

reading of it, in Vanhoozer's theological programme, necessarily requires him to proffer a hermeneutic that adequately accounts for the charge that all texts, including the biblical texts, are indeterminate. Our interest here is to establish the capacity of Vanhoozer's hermeneutic to address the contemporary questions concerning determinacy, the locus of meaning and the role of the reader, on the one hand, and to accommodate our concept of 'story', on the other.

**"The covenant of discourse and the discourse of covenant:"¹⁵
Vanhoozer's trinitarian hermeneutic and the theo-drama's script**

Vanhoozer offers his theological hermeneutic under the conviction that the question about meaning in communication is at its very heart theological, and as such Christian theology has a positive contribution to make. Vanhoozer avers:

The best general hermeneutics is a Trinitarian hermeneutics... My appeal to the Trinity arises... from the perception that the literary crisis about textual meaning is related to the broader philosophical crisis concerning realism, rationality, and right, and that this crisis, summed up by the term 'postmodern,' is in turn explicitly theological.¹⁶

His theological approach to hermeneutics, therefore, is "to let the 'discourse of the covenant' (Scripture) inform and transform our understanding of the 'covenant of discourse' (ordinary language and literature)."¹⁷ Our present interest, however, is in Vanhoozer's adaptation of his *general* hermeneutic to apply specifically to scripture as a unique body of literature. In establishing his *general* hermeneutic, Vanhoozer had argued that "the Bible should be interpreted 'like any other book'; but *every* book should be interpreted with the norms that we derive and establish from

¹⁵ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *First Theology: God, Scripture and Hermeneutics* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002), 159.

¹⁶ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998), 456.

¹⁷ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 161.

trinitarian theology.”¹⁸ In developing his “*special* hermeneutic”, Vanhoozer subsequently qualifies this statement by identifying “the ways in which the Bible is *not* to be read ‘like any other book.’”¹⁹ He does not, however, consider his special hermeneutic to be “a retraction” of his earlier general hermeneutic, rather he sees it as “an enrichment” of the former that brings greater clarity to the understanding of scripture as “divine discourse.”²⁰ For Vanhoozer, scripture is unique because:

(1) no other book bears divine authorial discourse; (2) no other book is the primary script of the theodrama; (3) no other book is so implicated in the triune economies of revelation and redemption; and (4) no other book is the medium for the self-presentation of Jesus Christ through the Spirit.²¹

Thus, Vanhoozer’s doctrine of scripture is explicitly brought to bear in his special hermeneutic.²² Our approach in this sub-chapter will be to offer a synthesis of Vanhoozer’s earlier and later thought since his later special hermeneutic assumes much of what he has argued in his earlier general hermeneutic.

The specific focus of Vanhoozer’s trinitarian hermeneutics is the economic Trinity, the activity of the triune God in creation and redemption as depicted in the biblical literature.

From a Christian perspective, God is first and foremost a communicative agent, one who relates to humankind through words and the Word. Indeed, God’s very being is a self-communicative act that both constitutes and enacts the covenant of discourse: speaker (Father), Word (Son), and reception (Spirit) are all interrelated. Human communication is a similarly covenantal affair, though we cannot pour ourselves into our communicative

¹⁸ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 456; emphasis original.

¹⁹ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free? Text, Status, and Theological Interpretation in the Master/Slave Discourse of Philemon’, in A.K.M. Adam et al. (eds.), *Reading Scripture with the Church: Toward a Hermeneutic for Theological Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2006), 51-94 (60); emphasis original. Vanhoozer cites Benjamin Jowett, *The Interpretation of Scripture and other Essays* (London: Routledge, 1907).

²⁰ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 61.

²¹ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 75.

²² See §3.2 ‘Story and Theological Studies’.

acts and ensure their effects as God can through his Word and Spirit. Humans have the dignity of communicative agency, though not the perfection.²³

Thus, for Vanhoozer, the very capacity for communication originates in the triune God and has been gifted to humanity as a result of being made in God's image. Along with the Creator, people have the ability to engage each other as communicative agents. In short, "God underwrites language."²⁴ While human communication is imperfect – the 'Fall' distorting what was already impeded by human finiteness – the ability to communicate and to relate meaningfully with God, fellow humans and the world is affirmed throughout the biblical narrative (e.g., Gen 15:7-8, 18; 21:27). The concept of covenant is basic for Vanhoozer's hermeneutic: "The divine plan of language is to serve as the medium of covenantal relations with God, with others, with the world."²⁵ Language, therefore, is a vehicle for interpersonal communication between covenant partners.²⁶

Are texts a reliable medium for covenantal discourse?

In his defence of the reliability of texts as a medium for covenantal discourse, Vanhoozer opposes the claim of Derrida, whom he labels "the father of 'deconstruction'," that all texts are indeterminate.²⁷ Vanhoozer characterises Derrida as "an unbeliever in the reliability, decidability, and neutrality of the sign."²⁸ In

²³ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 456-57.

²⁴ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 160. Cf. George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago, IL: UCP, 1989), 3. Steiner avers: "[A]ny coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption of God's presence."

²⁵ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 206.

²⁶ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 167.

²⁷ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 19.

²⁸ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 39, 70-73. Vanhoozer categorises Derrida and Foucault with Nietzsche as examples of nihilism – "the denial of meaning, authority, and truth" (73). Jensen, however, perceives a distinction between the underlying theology of Derrida and that of his postmodern counterpart Foucault. Nihilism appropriately categorises Foucault, but Derrida is perhaps better categorised as a contemporary example of medieval mysticism's negative theology, where God is "absolutely

support of his position, Vanhoozer recruits the hermeneutics of Ricoeur coupled with Searle's speech-act theory and Habermas's social theory.²⁹

Together with Ricoeur, Vanhoozer distinguishes between the science of signs (semiotics) and the science of sentences (semantics) arguing that a sentence "introduces a level of complexity and uniqueness than cannot be described by semiotics."³⁰ Vanhoozer agrees with Ricoeur: "The sentence is not a larger or more complex word, it is a *new* entity. It may be decomposed into words, but words are something other than short sentences. A sentence is a whole, irreducible to the sum of its parts."³¹ Drawing an analogy from physical and mental characteristics of people, Vanhoozer asserts, "Just as we can apply two sets of predicates (physical and mental) to persons, so we can apply two kinds of description (semiotic and semantic) to sentences."³² For Vanhoozer, the distinction corrects what he sees as a preoccupation with the sign over the sentence in deconstructionism, or in other words, the collapse of semantics into semiotics. Thus, while sentences may be analysed in terms of their individual words whose meaning without a context is equivocal, it is the sentence as a whole which is basic for determining meaning. But are sentences any more stable than words?

inaccessible by human language" (Jensen, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 212). Thiselton charges Vanhoozer with being too "eager to engage in polemic before he has asked what he might learn from Derrida" (Thiselton, *Hermeneutics*, 333). On one hand the criticism is fair, Vanhoozer clearly develops his hermeneutic in opposition to Derrida, but on the other, he also concedes that deconstructionism may serve as a disciplinary rod to correct over-ambitious claims (Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 464).

²⁹ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 207.

³⁰ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 204. Ricoeur reflects: "For me, the distinction between semantics and semiotics is the key to the whole problem of language" (Paul Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 8).

³¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 7; emphasis mine. Cf. Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 166.

³² Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 204.

Here Vanhoozer adds the distinction that speech-act theorist Searle makes with Derrida between linguistic ‘types’, the *form* of a sentence, and linguistic ‘tokens’, the particular *use* and *context* of a sentence.³³ Thus the same sentence ‘type’, for example, “he’s hot”, may alter in meaning in different contexts, say, observing a tennis player’s athleticism, or observing a patient’s temperature, but the meaning remains determinate according to the sentence ‘token’.³⁴ According to Searle: “The fact that someone might perform *another* speech act with a *different* token of the same type... has no bearing whatever on the role of the speaker’s utterance meaning in the determination of the speech act.”³⁵ Thus, while a sentence ‘type’ may be indeterminate, the sentence ‘token’ is controlled by its function in the discourse. Searle clarifies what he believes in Derrida’s programme to be a confusion between the epistemological question (the ability to know the meaning of a speech-act) and the ontological question (whether meaning is there in the first place). For Searle, it is a mistake “to suppose that the lack of evidence, that is, our ignorance, shows indeterminacy or undecidability in principle,” which is precisely what he considers Derrida to be doing.³⁶

Ricoeur finds fault with Derrida’s view that a text, unlike speech, is a self-enclosed system of signs without author or external reference.³⁷ Ricoeur rather defines a text as “discourse fixed by writing,”³⁸ and affirms that writing shares certain affinities with speech as a form of communication. “A text remains a discourse told by

³³ Cf. John R. Searle, ‘Literary Theory and its Discontents’, *NLH* 25 (1994): 637-67.

³⁴ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 212.

³⁵ Searle, ‘Literary Theory’, 660. Searle chides Derrida for thinking “that because marks and signs are iterable, that is, repeatable and alterable on subsequent occasion, that somehow or other the original speaker has lost control of his utterance” (659).

³⁶ Searle, ‘Literary Theory’, 648, 662.

³⁷ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 26.

³⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), 145.

somebody, *said by someone to someone else about something*.”³⁹ A text, therefore, has both human agency and external reference. Vanhoozer helpfully compares the views of Derrida and Ricoeur:

Derrida sees language as a self-referential system without center or stable structure. Ricoeur sees language as a structure that exists not for its own sake but for referring beyond itself to the world. Discourse has a sense (something said), a reference (about something), and a destination (to someone).⁴⁰

Ricoeur maintains that texts exist as a result of human agency; he rejects what he labels the “fallacy of the absolute text”—for Ricoeur, a text is not an “authorless entity.”⁴¹ However, Ricoeur is careful to distinguish the text’s meaning from that of the author, and to distance himself from Schleiermacher’s psychological hermeneutic that sought to locate the meaning of a text in the inner thought processes of the author.⁴² For Ricoeur, once written the text has a life of its own, independent of that of the author.⁴³ He asserts:

Inscription becomes synonymous with the semantic autonomy of the text which results from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text, of what the author meant and what the text means. The text’s career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it.⁴⁴

³⁹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30; emphasis mine.

⁴⁰ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 214.

⁴¹ Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 30.

⁴² Ricoeur, *Interpretation Theory*, 22-23, 30. The ultimate goal of hermeneutics for Schleiermacher was to understand the preverbal experience of the author. The reader’s task is to transform “oneself into the other person” and so ideally “to understand the utterance at first just as well and then better than its author” (Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, trans. and ed. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy; Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 23, 92).

⁴³ Cf. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 147.

⁴⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination*, ed. Mario J. Valdés (New York, NY and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 324-25. Ricoeur’s view has been referred to as the doctrine of ‘ideality’. The doctrine “distinguishes between authorial intention and the element in language that remains constant and fixes meaning: ideality.” This contrasts sharply with Derrida for whom “there can be no purely ‘ideal’ meaning; there is only an endless series of reverberations” (Craig G. Bartholomew, ‘Deconstruction’, in *DTIB*, 163-65, (164)).

Vanhoozer agrees with Ricoeur against Derrida that a text has its own semantic force – texts are determinate – although he prefers to explain this in speech-act categories as the illocutionary force of the text. However, Vanhoozer finds himself at odds with Ricoeur’s insistence that the meaning of the text is loosed from that of the author’s original intention. Vanhoozer seeks to reinstate the concept of ‘authorial intention’ as the locus of meaning but to avoid Schleiermacher’s psychological hermeneutic by placing the emphasis upon the resulting text as the author’s intentional act.

The text as the author’s ‘communicative act’

Vanhoozer agrees with Ricoeur on the fitting analogy between texts and meaningful action,⁴⁵ however, whereas Ricoeur explores the interpretive benefits of analysing meaningful actions as texts, Vanhoozer applies the analogy in reverse to argue that texts might be viewed as meaningful action. In the same manner that actions might be misconstrued unless consideration be given to what a person was intending to do by an action, Vanhoozer avers that when interpreting a text, which he defines broadly as “a communicative *act* of a communicative *agent* fixed by writing,”⁴⁶ consideration must likewise be given to the intention of the author. Thus, drawing from the insights of Habermas’ social theory, Vanhoozer argues that a speech-act ought *not* to be divorced from the author or the author’s context.⁴⁷ For Vanhoozer, authors seek to do things through texts, and a faithful, covenantal reading of the text ought to seek

⁴⁵ Cf. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 197-221.

⁴⁶ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 225; emphasis mine.

⁴⁷ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 217. For example, Habermas identifies three criteria to test the validity of a speech-act. The second criterion requires that it sincerely express the speaker’s intentions and the third that it be appropriate to the social setting in which it was uttered. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 313.

to determine what it is that the author is doing.⁴⁸ A text, therefore, is enacted intention, its genre, structure, content, and semantic force embody the intention of the author.⁴⁹ From this perspective, interpretative enquiry explores not the “motives behind the act,” as per Schleiermacher, but rather “the nature, structure, and content of the literary act” itself.⁵⁰ Recasting this in terms of speech-act categories, Vanhoozer agrees with Searle that a text’s meaning is associated with the illocutionary act, what the author is actually doing by means of the text.⁵¹ Hence, “The author is the one to whom certain illocutionary acts can be imputed.”⁵²

To this end, Vanhoozer adopts a ‘missional model’ of communication in preference to the ‘sender-receiver model’ in communication theory. In the sender-receiver model,

a source (speaker, author) encodes a message into a linguistic signal (speech, text) that serves as the channel that conveys the message (through air, across time) to a destination (listener, reader) that receives the message by decoding the signal.⁵³

However, when Vanhoozer reflects upon the *missio Dei* he observes:

[T]he mission of the Son – God’s ‘sending’ his Word to earth – should be seen in terms of *acting*, not *encoding*. For the sending is not simply a conveying of information but a conveying of God’s very own person... For what God purposed in sending his Son (and later the Holy Spirit)... was as much transformative as informative.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ A similar argument is made by Francis Watson: “If, as I have argued, the category of the speech-act can be extended to include written communications, then the current hostility to the concepts of determinate meaning and authorial intention is unjustified. To be understood at all, a series of words must be construed as a communicative action” (Francis Watson, *Text and Truth: Redefining Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 103).

⁴⁹ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 252-53.

⁵⁰ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 239.

⁵¹ Cf. John R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: CUP, 1969). See also, Scott A. Blue, ‘Meaning, Intention, and Application: Speech Act Theory in the Hermeneutics of Francis Watson and Kevin J. Vanhoozer’, *TJ* 23 (2002): 161-84.

⁵² Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 176.

⁵³ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 167.

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 168-69; emphasis mine.

A missional model of communication, Vanhoozer insists, attends to what a person is doing in speaking/writing. Language is a communicative act to which the hearer/reader imputes intention to the speaker/author. Thus, for Vanhoozer, communication may be deemed successful “when the speaker’s [or author’s] communicative intention becomes mutually known.”⁵⁵ Importantly, this is true, irrespective of the perlocutionary effect upon the hearer/reader – understanding does not imply acceptance/obedience. This assertion allows Vanhoozer to reframe Hirsch’s ‘meaning/significance’ distinction into speech-act categories, identifying a text’s meaning with the completed illocutionary act, and a text’s intentional or unintentional significance with its ongoing perlocutionary effects.⁵⁶

The reader as faithful covenant partner

As noted above, the major contribution of postmodern literary theory for hermeneutics is a greater appreciation of the role of the reader in the interpretative process. With this in mind, Vanhoozer considers the role of the reader from the perspective of covenant, where the reader is called to “interpretative morality”,⁵⁷ namely, to respect the otherness of the text and to let it have its say. In Vanhoozer’s hermeneutic, belief in the ‘other’ is basic, as is belief that ‘there is meaning in a text.’⁵⁸ Interpretation thus attends to the author’s testimony *in* the text.⁵⁹ With both

⁵⁵ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 180.

⁵⁶ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 260-63. According to Hirsch: “*Meaning* is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence; it is what signs represent. *Significance*, on the other hand, names a relationship between that meaning and a person, or a conception, or a situation or indeed anything imaginable” (E.D. Hirsch Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1967), 8; emphasis original).

⁵⁷ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 393.

⁵⁸ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 289. Cf. Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (Oxford: OUP, 1993).

⁵⁹ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 291. Cf. C.A.J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992). Coady states “Our trust in the word of others is fundamental to the very idea of serious cognitive activity” (vii).

Lewis and Steiner, Vanhoozer asserts, “ethical reading is a struggle to hear a voice that is genuinely other than our own.”⁶⁰ Applying the Golden Rule (cf. Matt 7:12) to hermeneutics, Vanhoozer exhorts interpreters to read for understanding in the same way they wish to be read and understood.⁶¹ In the same manner as there is for a witness in a court of law, there is a moral imperative for the responsible reader: “you shall not give false testimony” (cf. Exod 20:16).⁶² “The ethical interpreter,” Vanhoozer posits, “preserves the efficacy of past communicative action.”⁶³ An ethical reading attends not only to the locutionary act, but also to the illocutionary force of the text so as to discern what an author is doing in the text. The interpreter’s role is analogous to that of a judge in the courtroom – it is a matter of “imputing intentions to agents justly.”⁶⁴ As a faithful covenant partner, the interpreter seeks to hear the text and to identify its message, rather than read one’s own agenda into it.

Although no reading is free from ideological bias, this does not suggest for Vanhoozer that readers inevitably only ever find themselves in a text, even if this is a real possibility. For Vanhoozer, responsible reading is similar to translation, particularly of the dynamic equivalent variety. Whereas formal equivalent approaches to translation theory place emphasis upon lexical and syntactical equivalence, the dynamic equivalent approach seeks to transfer the *meaning* of the original language into the receptor language. “What matters here is the *illocutionary*

⁶⁰ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 374-75. Lewis, for example, encourages withholding a critical reading of the text initially to allow the text to first engage the reader, even at the risk of “being taken in.” He suggests that “the necessary condition of all good reading is ‘to get ourselves out of the way’” (C.S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Oxford: OUP, 1961), 93, 94). For Steiner, responding to the ‘other’ is a “moral act” (George Steiner, *Real Presences*, 90).

⁶¹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 181.

⁶² Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 398; Exod 20:16 (TNIV).

⁶³ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 392.

⁶⁴ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 183.

and *perlocutionary* rather than the locutionary correspondence.”⁶⁵ Dynamic equivalent translations, then, do not seek to be identical to the original, but to faithfully transfer the meaning of the original into new contexts. Thanks to faithful translations, texts speak beyond their original context into new settings. Likewise, “‘interpretation’ [is] that which gives language life beyond the moment and place of immediate utterance or transcription.”⁶⁶ Interpretation, as with apostolic tradition, is not reduplication, but a creative, yet faithful rendering for a new audience. The goal is *ipse* identity, which speaks of personal sameness or self-constancy, rather than the numerical exactness implied by *idem* identity.⁶⁷

For Vanhoozer, interpretation does not involve a ‘fusion of horizons’ as per Gadamer, but an ongoing respectful dialogue between two distinct others – text and reader.⁶⁸ In the interpretative process, the ‘otherness’ of both text and reader is preserved: the horizons of both text and reader are freely acknowledged and even embraced. Neither texts nor readers can be divested of their context, and indeed, the variety of contexts that various readers bring to the interpretative process may actually disclose a richer understanding of the text. Vanhoozer agrees with Bakhtin’s observation: “Semantic phenomena can exist in concealed form, potentially, and can be revealed only in semantic cultural contexts of subsequent epochs that are

⁶⁵ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 387.

⁶⁶ George Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation* (Oxford: OUP, 2nd ed., 1992), 28. For Steiner, “translation is formally and pragmatically implicit in every act of communication... To understand is to decipher. To hear significance is to translate” (xii). Cf. Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 388.

⁶⁷ Cf. Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 390-92. While rejecting pluralism, Vanhoozer nonetheless affirms “a ‘Pentecostal plurality,’ which maintains that the one true interpretation is best approximated by a diversity of particular methods and contexts of reading” (Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 419).

⁶⁸ Gadamer distinguishes between the horizon of the text (the ‘world of the text’) and the horizon of the reader (the ‘world of the reader’), which is always evolving, and considers that “[u]nderstanding... is always the fusion of these horizons” (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 273, 359). Thus, for Gadamer, there are multiple legitimate readings of the same text. In denying that ‘fusion’ takes place, Vanhoozer seeks to maintain Hirsch’s meaning-significance categories. Cf. Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 106-7, 303, 390.

favourable for such disclosure.”⁶⁹ Rather than an inevitable block to interpretation, the reader’s distance from the text necessitates dialogue that potentially enhances textual understanding. A reader’s preunderstanding, therefore, is not necessarily a bane for interpretation; it may actually be a boon.

The canon as a multiform ‘divine communicative act’

We have noted previously Vanhoozer’s insistence that the canon is a polyphonic testimony.⁷⁰ Since, for Vanhoozer, the illocutionary force of a text may only be apparent at the generic and canonical levels, he gives particular attention in his hermeneutic to the final form of a text as a literary unity and to the function of a text within the entire canon.⁷¹ By way of contrast, Vanhoozer suggests that historical reconstructions of events *behind* the text have some value, but ultimately can only offer ‘thin’ descriptions of the text, that is, they may speak *about* the text yet fail to attend to the message of the text itself. However, he insists, an appropriately ‘thick’ description allows one “to appreciate everything the author is doing in a text”⁷² and so will attend to all three aspects of the speech-act – the locution, the illocution, and the perlocution. Similarly, Vanhoozer distinguishes between a ‘literal’ sense and a ‘literalistic’ sense of the text. ‘Literalistic’ readings concentrate on the locutionary act and so only ‘thinly’ describe a text. ‘Literal’ readings, on the other hand, attend to the locutionary *and* the illocutionary act and thus examine what is meant by the

⁶⁹ M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin, TX: UTP, 1986), 5. Bakhtin acknowledges the value of entering a foreign culture and “seeing the world through its eyes... [as] a necessary part of understanding it”, but insists that it is only through viewing a culture from the “outside” that new insights and understanding can emerge (7).

⁷⁰ See §3.2 ‘Story and Theological Studies’.

⁷¹ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 191-94.

⁷² Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 284. Vanhoozer adapts the notion of a ‘thick’ description from Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Essays Vol. 2* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990).

words as artistically employed.⁷³ The importance of this distinction will be evident in Part B when we revisit the ‘cosmic’ language and ‘coming of the son of man’ sayings in the Synoptic Gospels.

According to Vanhoozer’s hermeneutic, the exegetical task is not complete until one attends to the text as a unified literary act: textual understanding necessitates consideration of both content *and* form.⁷⁴ While not rigid, genres provide a relatively stable environment for social interaction, and attention to historical literary forms assists with understanding by affording a broader literary context within which readers may interpret a particular text. Bailey defines genres as “the conventional and repeatable patterns of oral and written speech, which facilitate interaction among people in specific social situations.”⁷⁵ The genre of a work, therefore, dictates how it is to be read: in other words, to read a text according to the intention of the author is to agree to read according to the rules of the genre employed. Attention to genre allows the reader to identify what an author is doing through the entire text. Narratives, for example, “perform the unique act of displaying a world”⁷⁶ with respect to which the author offers an evaluation via the ‘point of view’ of the narrative.⁷⁷ We shall return to this insight in Part B of our study where we recommend a reading of the Synoptic Gospels that gives priority to their narrative form.

⁷³ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 310-12.

⁷⁴ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 343.

⁷⁵ James L. Bailey, ‘Genre Analysis’, in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 197-221 (200).

⁷⁶ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 192. Cf. Mary Louise Pratt, *Towards a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977).

⁷⁷ Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 192. Cf. Susan Snaider Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1981).

Moreover, Vanhoozer argues that suitably ‘thick’ descriptions of the text must attend to what “God is doing in and with the various strata of biblical discourse.”⁷⁸ Since the canon provides an additional context for textual meaning, “beyond the original historical and literary contexts,”⁷⁹ the critical task of the interpreter is to relate what the divine and human authors are doing at the sentential and generic levels to what God is doing through the canon as a whole.⁸⁰ Indeed he insists:

Theological hermeneutics is a matter, first, of grasping the basic plot – of being able to relate the various scenes in the theodrama to what God has done climactically in Jesus Christ – and, second, of grasping how we can go on following Christ in new situations so that our speech and action corresponds to the truth of the gospel.⁸¹

Vanhoozer’s first point argues that the exegetical task remains incomplete until the passage under scrutiny is related to the plot of the script as a whole – it is insufficient merely to address the historical and literary contexts and neglect the canonical context. ‘Thick’ descriptions, on the other hand, seek to situate a biblical text within the entire drama and note its contribution to the overall plot. We have already defined our concept of ‘story’ in relation to the plot of the script; here we note agreement with Vanhoozer’s hermeneutic which stresses the importance of attending to the canon’s plot or storyline as the broad context for discerning the significance of a text. This we identify as the hermeneutic of ‘story’. We now turn our attention to Vanhoozer’s second point: the performance of the script.

⁷⁸ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 71.

⁷⁹ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 380.

⁸⁰ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 71. For Vanhoozer, what some refer to as *sensus plenior* or the ‘fuller sense’ “is in fact the literal sense, taken at the level of its thickest description” (Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 313).

⁸¹ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 77.

Performing the Script: Improvisation

For Vanhoozer, an ethical reading considers also the perlocutionary force of the text and explores the effects of the text upon the reader. With Ricoeur, Vanhoozer witnesses to the potential of a text to transform the reader, to project itself upon the reader and to bring about a new self-awareness.⁸² A “text can become more than a dialogue partner; it can become a pedagogue that illumines one’s existence and opens up new ways of living in the world.”⁸³ As the reader engages the text, the text also engages the reader. In the process of reading, the reader is also being read; the interpreter becomes the interpreted. Vanhoozer describes this process as the “struggle between sense and self”⁸⁴ – the reader who dies to self finds the ability to take self up again transformed as a result of the encounter.⁸⁵ This is particularly true, for Vanhoozer, of the biblical writings: “The biblical text... creates a space wherein the reader lays himself or herself open to divine communicative action,”⁸⁶ and thus to the transforming work of the Spirit (cf. Rom 12:2).⁸⁷

Within Vanhoozer’s theological programme, scripture not only testifies to the theodrama, but is also the script by which the people of God participate in the drama. In order to offer a fitting performance of the script, participants must, on the one hand, be thoroughly immersed in the themes and plot of the script so that their

⁸² Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 375-76. By ‘appropriation’, Ricoeur understands “that the interpretation of a text culminates in the self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, understands himself differently, or simply begins to understand himself” (Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 158).

⁸³ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 375. Vanhoozer argues that it is necessary to journey with a text at least part of the way to determine whether it is worth following for the full distance.

⁸⁴ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 406. Cf. Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 159.

⁸⁵ Cf. Ricoeur: “Thus appropriation ceases to appear as a kind of possession, as a way of taking hold of... It implies instead a moment of dispossession of the narcissistic *ego*. ...Only the interpretation which satisfies the injunction of the text, which follows the ‘arrow’ of meaning and endeavours to ‘think in accordance with’ it, engenders a new *self*-understanding” (Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 192-93; emphasis original).

⁸⁶ Vanhoozer, *Meaning*, 406.

⁸⁷ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 73.

improvisation remains faithful to it, and on the other hand, be keenly aware of their own social-cultural context so as to discern the most appropriate performance of the script for that setting. Vanhoozer asserts: “[T]his is precisely the task of discipleship: to find ways of staying faithful to our script in the midst of constantly changing circumstances.”⁸⁸ Faithful improvisation requires adequate training and discipline – hence the place and need for theology⁸⁹ – coupled with imagination and spontaneity, which give place to Spirit-inspired creative expression.⁹⁰ Faithful improvisation is neither a wooden performance of the script nor unrestrained ad-libbing. Vanhoozer refers to Nussbaum: “An improvising actress, if she is improvising well, does not feel that she can say just anything at all. She must suit her choice to the evolving story, which has its own form and continuity.”⁹¹

Maintaining continuity with the plot in each spontaneous performance necessarily requires adequate memory of what has gone before.⁹² Indeed, Vanhoozer asserts: “The improviser is one who seeks not to create novelty but to respond to the past..., for the future is formed *out of the past*. The improviser is like ‘a man walking backwards.’”⁹³ Skilful improvisation sustains continuity with the script through the appropriate reincorporation of the past into the current scenario. However, the improviser’s new social-cultural context forbids exact replication; rather the aim is narrative unity, *ipse* identity rather than *idem* or numerical identity.⁹⁴ Faithful

⁸⁸ Vanhoozer, ‘Imprisoned or Free?’, 81.

⁸⁹ “[D]octrines help us to improvise judgements about what new things to say and do that are nevertheless consistent with our canonical script” (Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 335).

⁹⁰ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 337-38.

⁹¹ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York, NY: OUP, 1990), 94. Cf. Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 337.

⁹² Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 337. Cf. Gary Izzo, *The Art of Play: The New Genre of Interactive Theatre* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1997), 176.

⁹³ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 339; emphasis original. The citation is from Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1981), 116.

⁹⁴ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 344, 353.

performances seek to enact the theo-drama in new and various contexts and so will never be identical either with each other or with the script itself. Nonetheless, not just any performance will suffice. The appropriateness of a performance can be discerned by its congruence with the storyline of the script.

Significantly, for our purposes, Vanhoozer suggests that improvisation occurs within the canon itself. Vanhoozer observes how “later biblical texts reincorporate the earlier material. They translate; they typologize; they improvise (*sic*).”⁹⁵

Indeed, one might say that the whole New Testament is an improvisation upon the Old. For, *what makes the whole Bible a unified canon is the unified action at its heart, and what gives unified action closure is the recapitulation of all that has gone before in Jesus Christ...* It is this recapitulation of the central events in the drama of redemption – exodus, exile, entry to the promised land – that ultimately provides a framework for understanding the saving significance of Jesus’ death.⁹⁶

It is the creative yet faithful improvisation of earlier biblical texts by later writers of scripture that is of primary interest to our inquiry. Vanhoozer’s concept of improvisation provides a helpful perspective on what takes place within the canon itself as subsequent generations improvise upon the received biblical tradition for their own contexts, only to have their own improvisations of earlier texts become scripture for yet later generations. The congruence of these diverse writings is discerned by their continuity with the plot or storyline of the unfolding drama.

⁹⁵ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 351.

⁹⁶ Vanhoozer, *Drama*, 341, 388.

Summary

Vanhoozer seeks to clarify the author-text-reader relationship for the postmodern environment where the reader's new found liberation often occurs at the silencing of the author's voice. Viewed from the perspective of the economy of the triune God, language is to be understood in terms of the covenant. At its heart, language is interpersonal communication between covenant partners, and texts, an occurrence of interpersonal communication put into writing. A text is viewed as the author's communicative act to which the reader as covenant partner imputes intention. Readers are challenged to be faithful covenant partners – to read as they themselves would like to be read and to speak truly of the testimony of the 'other' in the text.

In addition to attending to the historical and literary contexts of a particular passage, Vanhoozer's hermeneutic insists that the interpreter give sufficient consideration to the generic and canonical force of the text. Since some aspects of the generic force only become evident when the work is considered as a whole, the exegete must give attention to the final form of the text. Moreover, Vanhoozer argues that the interpreter's task remains incomplete until a text is related to the canon's plot or storyline. The canon provides the broadest context for discerning the significance of a text. In Part B of our thesis we adopt Vanhoozer's position to argue that each Synoptic Gospel must be considered as an individual literary act and that adequate consideration must be given to the coherency of the narrative in each case. In addition, we explore the controlling influence of the script's plot upon the Gospel writers and the significance for our reading of the 'coming of the son of man' passages in particular.

For the people of God, the Bible is not only a sacred record of past encounters with their creator and redeemer, but a living word, a divine communicative act, through which they continue to commune with their God by the Spirit. Their rich scriptural tradition is the means by which their God continues to speak to them, and importantly, transform the life of the community. Interestingly, it is the process of interpretation and improvisation that enables the Bible to continue to function as scripture to later generations and for various cultures. Like translation, interpretation allows a text to speak afresh into new contexts and equip the people of God for appropriate participation within the theo-drama. What is significant is that this process of improvising the sacred text is not unique to the post-canonical period, but is evidenced within scripture itself. Our enquiry engages with this phenomenon with particular interest in the intertextual links that indicate the process of improvisation in the formation of Israel's scriptures. This is the primary burden of §4 'The Making of Israel's Story'. Subsequently, we observe the intertexture between the Old Testament and New Testament literature and investigate the import of Israel's 'story' for the writers of the Synoptic Gospels. Specifically, we explore the significance of the Synoptic accounts as improvisations of Israel's 'story' in view of the Jesus event (Part B).

§4 The Making of Israel's Story

Introduction

In the discussion thus far we have defined Israel's 'story' as a theological-historical construct that seeks to identify the plot in Israel's scriptures. The articulation of Israel's story and an examination of its import for the growth of the scriptural tradition and for Israel's self-understanding is the focus of this current chapter. Our basic premise is that the tradition developed via the process of improvisation, where each generation, in demonstrating continuity with its forebears, appropriated the received tradition for its own milieu. The growth and transformation of the scriptural tradition is especially evident in the phenomenon of intra-canonical intertextuality, and a brief examination of this leads our present discussion. Subsequently, we outline the major turning points or contours in Israel's story before exploring the complex relationship between the story and the people who claim it as their own, noting particularly how the identity of those who claim to be 'Israel' morphs along with each major development in the storyline. Finally, we take a brief look at improvisation in the Qumran community as a late second-temple example of how the story of Israel shaped their self-understanding in view of their own *Sitz im Leben*.

Intra-canonical Intertextuality¹

The intertextuality within Israel's scriptures is the focus of Michael Fishbane's *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*.² In this epic study, Fishbane explores what he terms 'inner biblical exegesis' contending that Israel's tradition developed by means of its transmission, and that the exegetical methodology within Israel's biblical tradition is a primary source for exegetical practices in early Judaism. He asserts:

The Hebrew Bible (HB) is thus a thick texture of traditions received and produced over many generations. In the process, a complex dynamic between tradition (*traditum*) and transmission (*tradio*) developed – since every act of *tradio* selected, revised, and reconstituted the overall *traditum*. ... Indeed the copying, citation, interpretation, and explanation of the sacred Scriptures gave ample opportunity for the reformulation of *traditum* in postbiblical *tradio*.³

Fishbane attributes the growth of the tradition in the main to its transmission via the exegetical activity of the scribes who, utilising methods not unlike the scribal schools of their ANE neighbours, sought to present the ancient tradition in a manner relevant to their own time.⁴ In seeking to provide clarification and reapplication of the

¹ Although Porter has questioned the value of the term 'intertextuality' due to the inconsistent manner in which it is employed, we follow Moyise in suggesting that the word is best understood as an 'umbrella' term covering a variety of academic endeavours that explore the relationship between texts. Our primary concern is with what Moyise labels *Dialogical Intertextuality*: the intersection of texts has repercussions in both directions; a quotation both interprets and is interpreted by the new text and vice versa. Cf. Steve Moyise, 'Intertextuality and the Study of the Old Testament in the New Testament', in Steve Moyise (ed.), *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J.L. North* (JSNTSup 189; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 14-41 (17-19); Stanley E. Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology', in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (eds.), *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* (JSNTSup 148; SSEJC 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 79-96 (84-5).

² Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: OUP, 1985). Cf. *idem*, 'Inner-Biblical Exegesis', in Magne Sæbø (ed.), *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* Vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1996), 33-48.

³ Fishbane, 'Inner-Biblical Exegesis', 34-5.

⁴ Eslinger argues against Fishbane's diachronic method, in preference for a synchronic approach. We agree with Eslinger that it may be a fruitful enterprise to adopt a synchronic approach, but with Sommer we also agree, against Eslinger, that some biblical texts invite, if not require, a diachronic approach such as that of Fishbane's. Cf. Lyle Eslinger, 'Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category', *VT* 42.1 (1992): 47-58; Benjamin D. Sommer, 'Exegesis,

tradition the scribes were in fact modifying the tradition. “Each textual level thus shows the power of *traditio* to transform (and so reinvent) the *traditum*.

Paradoxically, the tradents’ interpretations have become Scripture – even the (new) divine word.”⁵ The primary driving force behind this exegetical activity, as Childs helpfully qualifies, was Israel’s recognition of, and response to, the divine word in their sacred traditions, which, when coupled with their own life experience with God, generated fresh understanding of scripture.⁶

As Fishbane suggests, exegetical creativity is evident in the reapplication of earlier traditions: older prophecies undergo varying degrees of elaboration, adaptation, application, or revision by later writers. For example, YHWH’s promise to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13 that his descendant will build a house for YHWH’s name is non-specific as to the person’s identity. Moreover, it remains so in Samuel-Kings, even when Solomon attains the throne, despite rival claimants. The Chronicler, however, makes Solomon the explicit referent; YHWH informs David that Solomon is the son he has chosen (1 Chron 28:6).⁷ Development in the tradition is likewise evident in YHWH’s promise that he would establish the kingdom of David’s descendant forever. The promise forms the basis of the lament in Psalm 89, whereby the psalmist adapts the earlier text so as to apply it to Judah’s present crisis in which the Davidic dynasty is under threat.⁸ The psalmist cries out: “Lord, where is your steadfast love of old, which by your faithfulness you swore to David?” (Ps 89:49).

Allusion and Intertextuality in the Hebrew Bible: A Response to Lyle Eslinger’, *VT* 46.4 (1996): 479-89.

⁵ Fishbane, ‘Inner-Biblical Exegesis’, 36-7.

⁶ Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 58-60.

⁷ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 465-66.

⁸ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 465-66.

Sometimes prophecies are completely reinterpreted, such as Jeremiah's seventy-year exile (Jer 25:9-12). The Chronicler conflates Jeremiah's prophecy with Leviticus 26:34-5 to explain the exile as a sabbath rest for the land covering a literal seventy-year period, which came to an end with the return to the land under the decree of Cyrus (2 Chron 36:20-23). However, a rereading of Jeremiah's prophecy occurs in Daniel 9, where the seventy years now represents seventy sabbaths or ten Jubilees (i.e., 490 years), more than likely a symbolic figure. Reinterpreted within Daniel's apocalyptic vision, Jeremiah's prophetic oracle is no longer equated with the historical return of the Jews to Jerusalem under the directive of Cyrus, but rather is applied to a future eschatological event, which the Jews of the Maccabean period understood as a reference to the crisis under Antiochus IV Epiphanes and to the rededication of the temple in 164 BCE (cf. 1 Macc 1:41-64; 4:36-61).⁹

Clearly Israel's sacred writings witness to a developing tradition, the very means of which may be attributed to its own transmission from one generation to another.

Accordingly, Fishbane concludes his significant work declaring:

[Israel's sacred] texts and traditions, the received *traditum* of ancient Israel, were not simply copied, studied, transmitted, or recited. They were also, and by these means, subject to redaction, elucidation, reformulation, and outright transformation. Accordingly, our received traditions are complex blends of *traditum* and *traditio* in dynamic interaction, dynamic interpenetration, and dynamic interdependence.¹⁰

Thus with the close of the Hebrew canon,¹¹ what is preserved for the benefit and instruction of later generations is not only a collection of authoritative texts, but also

⁹ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 479-485.

¹⁰ Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 543.

¹¹ On the complex matter of the formation of the Hebrew canon see: David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (Oxford: OUP, 2011); Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); John J. Collins, 'Before the Canon: Scriptures in Second-Temple Judaism', in James Luther Mays et al.

a description of authorised exegetical activity. That subsequent generations would fervently continue and build upon this practice can only be expected.

But at what point does creative exegesis become eisegesis? What, for example, allows Daniel to so radicalise Jeremiah's prophecy and yet write with the conviction that he does so in faithfulness to the received tradition? Brueggemann's comment is instructive: "Intertextuality is a process of conversation by which the entire past and memory of the textual community is kept available and present in concrete and detailed ways."¹² Thus, driving this activity is the conviction that the God who spoke and acted in the past is also vitally involved in the present, and will continue to be so in the future. Daniel, along with other biblical writers, wrote from the perspective that he inhabited the biblical story; his worldview was shaped by the inherited textual tradition. This concurs with Vanhoozer's concept of scripture as script: the biblical writers, and the generations who followed immediately in their footsteps, understood themselves not just as curators of their ancient faith, but as participants in an unfolding story in which the God of their ancestors was also an active participant. Although it may not be possible to provide definitive dates for the formation and eventual closing of the Hebrew canon as a collection of authoritative

(eds.), *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 225-241; John Goldingay, *Approaches to Old Testament Interpretation* (Leicester: Apollos, 1990); Paul R. House, 'Canon of the Old Testament', in David S. Dockery et al. (eds.), *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 134-155; James A. Sanders, 1992. 'Canon', in *ABD* Vol. 1, 837-852; *idem*, 'The Exile and Canon Formation' in Scott, James M. (ed.), *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 37-61. While individual writings experienced their own complex transmission process, the dates for the canonisation of the various sections of the Hebrew scriptures might be broadly considered as follows: the Torah, as early as 622 or 550 BCE, but no later than *ca.* 450 BCE; the former prophets, during the Babylonian exile; the latter prophets, by *ca.* 200 BCE (cf., Sirach's prologue); and the Writings at least by the middle of the second century CE, but possibly as early as the mid to late second century BCE (cf., Sirach, *ca.* 132 BCE; 2 Macc 2:14; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1.37-41, 90 CE; Luke 24:44; Matt 23:35).

¹² Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997), 79.

books, the fact that all canonical books (except Esther¹³) were found within the Qumran libraries, for instance, suggests that the entire corpus was informative in Jewish self-understanding during the late second-temple period. In other words, whatever the status of the official canonical process, the books that would eventually be acknowledged as *the* sacred texts were functioning authoritatively within Jewish communities during this time.

If we are to view the growing textual tradition as an unfolding story that sweeps each subsequent generation into its narrative, can we outline the plot of that story? For this storyline to function as a controlling hermeneutic for the exegetical practices of the biblical writers an affirmative answer is essential. The burden of the subsequent discussion is to provide such an outline.

Contours of Israel's Story

If anything can be learned from the biblical theology movement of the twentieth century, it is that Israel's scriptures defy unification around a single theme or concept. Too much is lost from the biblical witness at the expense of highlighting one thread in what is a rich tapestry. Our contention is not that all writings, or all genres, equally and or explicitly articulate Israel's story as outlined below, but that the story that can be identified through the selected texts forms the broad context within which the various writings that make up the Old Testament corpus find individual expression. We agree with Goldingay: "The regulations in the Torah, the pronouncements of the prophets, the Wisdom books, and the praises and prayers of

¹³ The omission of Esther from the Qumran library "may be purely accidental" (Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1998), 11).

the Psalms are set in the context of a narrative.”¹⁴ This grand narrative commences with creation and closes with the partial restoration of Israel in the land, but looks forward to the “complete realization of Yhwh’s purpose for Israel and for the world that goes back to creation.”¹⁵

Prologue

In its final canonical shape, Israel’s remembered past is prefaced with a book of beginnings, which not only traces the nation’s forebears, but also places these within the context of the broader story of humanity as a whole. From the outset, the biblical narrative asserts that YHWH, who is at work within the nation of Israel, is none other than the God who is responsible for the creation of the world and everything in it.¹⁶ The events that unfold in the primeval history of Genesis 1-11 – creation, fall, flood and Babel – concern the entire cosmos, in general, and the story of humanity, who is made in the divine image, in particular. But seemingly without explanation, in the latter part of chapter eleven the focus shifts to centre upon the man Abram. We learn later in the biblical narrative that at the time of his call Abram held no particular religious allegiance (cf. Josh 24:2), which suggests his selection by YHWH was not based on personal merit but divine choice, and further, that his role and that of his descendants is a representative one within the broader story of God and his creation (cf. Gen 12:3; Exod 19:5-6). The ultimate focus, therefore, of the biblical narrative is the created order and humanity’s central role within this; however, as the plot

¹⁴ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Life* Vol. 3 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2009), 45.

¹⁵ Goldingay, *Israel’s life*, 45.

¹⁶ Cf. Gen 2:4, where the first occurrence of the divine name occurs as the compound title **יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים** identifying YHWH, Israel’s covenant partner (Exod. 3, 6), and Elohim, the creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1), as one and the same. Cf. Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (WBC, Vol. 1; Dallas, TX: Word, 1987), 57.

unfolds it is evident that the destiny of the human race is to be realised through God's dealings with Abram and his progeny.

First published over 30 years ago, David Clines' proposal for a creation-uncreation-recreation motif as the thematic link between Genesis 1-11 and the remainder of the Pentateuch still finds support.¹⁷ In brief, Clines' proposition identifies the flood as a reversal of creation, returning the world to the 'watery chaos' from which it initially arose.¹⁸ The earth undergoes re-creation with the subsiding of the waters – a "renewed separation of sea and land" – and the restatement of the earlier divine decree to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 8:17, 9:7, cf. Gen 1:28).¹⁹ The theological import of the flood therefore is to indicate the Creator's intention for a renewed creation. Despite the attempts of post-diluvium humanity to make a name for itself (cf. the Babel account, Gen 11:4), nothing will thwart this ambition; howbeit, the focus of this renewal henceforth centres upon Abram, Sarai, and their descendants.

The story of Abram is vitally connected with the preceding narrative via recurring motifs and via genealogical lists that identify Abram through Shem with Noah and the nations descended from him (cf. Table of Nations, Gen 10). Clines notes the dual function of the Table of Nations, suggesting that its inclusion in the text, out of chronological sequence with the divine scattering of peoples following the Babel account, allows it to serve as both judgement (Gen 11:7-9) and the fulfilment of the

¹⁷ Cf. David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSup 10; Sheffield: JSOT, 2nd ed., 1997), first published 1978; Walter Brueggemann, 'Theme Revisited: Bread Again!', in J. Cheryl Exum and H.G.M. Williamson (eds.), *Reading from Right to Left: Essays on the Hebrew Bible in Honour of David J.A. Clines* (JSOTSup 373; Sheffield: JSOT, 2003), 76-89. One of the main weaknesses Brueggemann identifies in Clines' proposal is that he did not take his insight *far enough*.

¹⁸ Clines, *Theme*, 80.

¹⁹ Clines, *Theme*, 81. See Clines for further parallels.

divine command to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 9:1, cf. 1:28).²⁰ One finds grace in the midst of judgement. Furthermore, having observed the Sin – Speech – Mitigation – Punishment pattern in the early chapters of Genesis, Clines asserts, “The patriarchal (or, Pentateuchal) narratives... function as the ‘mitigation’ element of the Babel story.”²¹ Abram is chosen from among the nations, who, while under divine judgement, will experience divine blessing through Abram. The hope of the nations, indeed the entire created order, thus resides in Abram and his offspring. Hence Clines affirms, “the divine promise to the patriarchs then demands to be read in conjunction with Genesis 1 – as re-affirmation of the divine intentions for humanity.”²²

From a canonical perspective the creation-uncreation-recreation theme provides the context for Israel’s story – the narratives of Abram and his descendants are situated within this foundation story. We concur with Goldingay:

Even if tradition-historically the primeval history is secondary to salvation history, and even if it is added to aid an understanding of Israel’s significance, this does not establish that the object of the creation of the world is the existence of Israel rather than that the object of Israel’s existence is to stand in service of God’s creation of the world. Salvation history finds its context in creation theology and is the context for it.²³

This is more than evident as the biblical narrative unfolds with the creation motif never far from the surface.²⁴ Moreover, the creation-uncreation-recreation theme provides a hermeneutical key for reading Israel’s subsequent narratives. Take, for example, the concept of ‘land’, which holds a central position in the ensuing story.

²⁰ Clines, *Theme*, 74.

²¹ Clines, *Theme*, 85.

²² Clines, *Theme*, 85.

²³ John Goldingay, *Theological Diversity and the Authority of the Old Testament* (BTCL, Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 95.

²⁴ Cf. Walter Brueggemann, ‘*Theme Revisited*’.

When viewed against the background of the creation story, particularly the Eden episode, YHWH's promise of land to Abram and his descendants may be viewed as a symbolic return to Eden.

Gordon Wenham has successfully demonstrated that, "the garden of Eden is not viewed by the author of Genesis simply as a piece of Mesopotamian farmland, but as an archetypal sanctuary, that is a place where God dwells and where man should worship him."²⁵ Eden itself is the mountain of God (cf. Ezek 28:13), "the center point in the cosmos of creation, a place where heaven and earth, God and man, meet."²⁶ Comparisons with ancient palaces, where the garden was adjacent to the king's residence, suggest that the garden depicted in Genesis 2 and 3, the home of the first man and woman, was likewise bordering the divine residence.²⁷ In the ancient world and in the biblical text, "creation as a whole was understood in terms of a temple complex," in which case "it would be logical to understand the garden as the antechamber to the holy of holies. Eden proper would be the Holy of Holies, and the garden adjoins it as the antechamber."²⁸ Garden imagery in the furnishings and artwork of later sanctuaries illustrates the point.²⁹ Eden and its garden thus function within the biblical narrative as the ideal sanctuary, which later sanctuaries emulate. When the biblical narrative describes the first humans' banishment from the garden, implicit also is their expulsion from the presence of God.

²⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story', in Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (eds.), *"I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood": Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404 (399).

²⁶ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Text and Texture* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1998), 112.

²⁷ John Walton, 'Eden, Garden of', in *DOTP*, 202-207.

²⁸ Walton, 'Eden', 205.

²⁹ Cf. Wenham, 'Sanctuary Symbolism' 401-403; Gregory K. Beale, 'Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation', *JETS* 48.1 (2005): 5-31.

From the discussion above it may now be evident that entry into the promised land, a 'land flowing with milk and honey', evokes a return to the garden of Eden.³⁰ It takes little imagination to see Mount Zion as YHWH's abode (Pss 68:16; 78:67-8) as a new Eden, a holy mountain where heaven and earth meet.³¹ Replicating the camp formation during the wilderness wanderings, where the tabernacle held central place and the tribes were positioned on all sides, Mount Zion holds central position in the land with tribal allotments on either side. In the same way that the concentric spheres of holiness radiating out from the ark of the covenant incorporated the entire camp, so too, not only the temple precincts, but the entire land is considered a sacred site. As YHWH once walked in the midst of the garden (Gen 3:8), and later in the camp (Deut 23:14), he subsequently dwells in the midst of the land (Num 35:34). Since the land itself borders the sanctuary, it also must be ritually pure.

Consequently, in the conquest, the inhabitants of the land are subject to the ban (חֵרֵם, lit., 'devoted to God') and are ejected from the land. So too, in the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles, both Israel and Judah, whose practices pollute the land, face similar expulsions (cf. Lev 18:24-28). *Thus, as with Eden, the significance of the promised land is not its geographical position or for that matter its political boundaries, but its symbolic function as the locus of YHWH's manifest presence on earth.*

³⁰ Like the garden of Eden, entry into the land is from the east.

³¹ Cf. Fishbane, *Text and Texture*, 114-15.

The Birth of a Nation: an emerging story

Though Israel would trace its ancestry to the nation's chief patriarch, Abraham, and beyond him to the first created beings, it is the exodus event that is the nation's most defining moment. Deliverance from Egyptian slavery, the initiation of the covenant in the Sinai wilderness, and eventual conquest of the promised land in fulfilment of the divine promise to Abram distinguish Israel as the people of YHWH. The exodus event represents the birth of a nation, the establishment of a people and their God. The memory of this event offers both identity and destiny to those who claim it as their own, or better, to those whom YHWH claims as his own. Arrival in the promised land, however, does not bring the narrative to conclusion. As the plot develops, Israel's covenantal unfaithfulness and subsequent exile from the land introduce conflict into the storyline, which is to be resolved by means of a glorious return to the land and, more importantly, by the triumphant return of YHWH to his people, so bringing the story to its climactic conclusion. Three main events – exodus, exile and return – form the nexus about which Israel's story revolves. It is not surprising therefore to observe frequent expressions of the exodus-exile-return motif within Israel's sacred writings.³²

³² The importance of the exile and return motifs for earlier second-temple Judaism was first recognised by Peter R. Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration: A Study of Hebrew Thought of the Sixth Century BC* (London: SCM, 1968). Ackroyd's work has been a catalyst for specific research into the period and highlighted the significance of these motifs for biblical theology, cf. Steven M Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (SNTSMS 117; Cambridge: CUP, 2002); Robert P. Carroll, 'Razed Temple and Shattered Vessels: Continuities and Discontinuities in the Discourse of Exile in the Hebrew Bible. An Appreciation of the Work of Peter R. Ackroyd', *JSOT* 75 (1997): 93-106; Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-Gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Ralph W. Klein, *Israel in Exile: A Theological Interpretation* (OBT; Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979); Gary Knoppers and Lester L. Grabbe, with Deirdre N. Fulton (eds.), *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd* (LSTS; London: T&T Clark, 2009); Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); James M. Scott (ed.), *Exile: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); James M. Scott (ed.),

The Story and the Deuteronomistic tradition.

Nowhere in the Old Testament corpus do we find a clearer articulation of Israel's story than in the Deuteronomistic writings, and particularly within Deuteronomy itself, where exodus, exile and return themes dominate.³³ Consider the recital of the exodus event that the people are instructed to rehearse before YHWH on the occasion of the First Fruits offering.

You shall make this response before the Lord your God, "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; and he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number; and there he became a great nation, mighty, and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us..., we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; and the LORD heard our voice.... The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm... and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey."³⁴

The book of Deuteronomy presents itself as Moses' last will and testament, where Moses outlines YHWH's final instructions to the people of Israel prior to entering the promised land.³⁵ The exhortation to 'remember' (זָכַר) reoccurs throughout the document,³⁶ reinforcing the importance of the exodus tradition for Israel's self-understanding. Indeed, parents are to instruct their children concerning these matters (Deut 6:1-9), which, along with Israel's annual feasts and offerings, instil the exodus

Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Wright, *NTPG*; *idem*, *JVG*.

³³ Cf. J.G. McConville, 'Restoration in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic Literature' in Scott, *Restoration*, 11-40 (12).

³⁴ Deut 26:5-9; abridged.

³⁵ The 'real author' and the 'real readers' do not concern us at this point. What will become evident is that the story narrated in this document will become normative not only for the Deuteronomist and the exilic community, where the book may have experienced its final editorial revision, but also for the generations of the late second-temple period. Cf. Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (London: SCM, 1999); Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

³⁶ Cf. Deut 5:15; 7:18; 8:2,18; 9:7; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7.

event into the national psyche, ensuring that the story is passed on from generation to generation.

From the perspective of the exodus, Israel's future is optimistic, however Moses forewarns of a crisis looming on the horizon with the prospect of Israel's disobedience to YHWH once they have entered the land.³⁷ Two pathways lie before the people of God; on the one hand lies the way of obedience with the promise of blessing, and on the other hand lies the way of disobedience with the resulting curses. Despite repeated exhortations to choose the former Moses declares Israel will pursue the latter. YHWH's faithfulness is exonerated; Israel's unfaithfulness is strongly denounced.

The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are just. A faithful God, without deceit, just and upright is he; yet his degenerate children have dealt falsely with him, a perverse and crooked generation.³⁸

The consequence of Israel's disloyalty would be disastrous. The judgements that came upon Egypt would also come upon Israel;³⁹ the nation would be humbled and cast from the land. From slavery Israel had come and to slavery it would return. Moses predicts,

The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.⁴⁰

The depiction of the exile in Deuteronomy is certainly bleak. The siege of Israel's cities and towns produce famine so severe that the inhabitants consume their own

³⁷ The concept of conflict within the storyline is fundamental to narratives. Cf. Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 42.

³⁸ Deut 32:4-5. Note that the expression 'a perverse and crooked generation' is covenantal language identifying those who have forsaken the covenant.

³⁹ Deut 28:27, 60.

⁴⁰ Deut 28:64.

children in desperate attempts to survive (Deut 28:47-57). Though once a great multitude, Israel would be reduced to a few (Deut 28:62).⁴¹ Yet through all this, Moses assures his audience that YHWH would remain steadfast to the covenant he has made. Assuring his audience, Moses declares:

When all these things come upon you..., if you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you, and return to the LORD your God... then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes, and have compassion on you.⁴²

Importantly, Israel's restoration involves more than just geographical relocation (cf. Deut 30:4-5). The nation's return from exile will include the personal transformation of each member, enabling each one to obey the LORD faithfully. Moses continues:

Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you. Then you shall again obey the LORD, observing all his commandments..., and the LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous.⁴³

Thus the Deuteronomist depicts the story's conclusion: the blissful reunion of YHWH and his people in the land of promise, with the people willingly and faithfully serving their God, and enjoying his bountiful provision in every aspect of their lives, while their enemies experience the full intensity of his curse.

Exodus, exile, and return – three key events within Israel's tradition that define its origins, dictate its present, and ensure its destiny. The attribution of the speeches in Deuteronomy to Moses substantiates this account as the official and therefore authoritative version of Israel's story. Furthermore the themes are reinforced at

⁴¹ Cf. Deut 1:10; 10:22.

⁴² Deut 30:1-3; abridged.

⁴³ Deut 30:6-9; abridged.

critical stages throughout the Deuteronomistic History.⁴⁴ The repetition of these themes in their sacred writings and, as noted above, in Israel's feasts and festivals served to enshrine this story within the people's psyche, fundamentally shaping their worldview.⁴⁵

The Story and the Pre-exilic Prophets: an emerging hermeneutic

The authoritative nature of this story becomes increasingly significant when one considers the ministry of Israel's prophets. According to Deuteronomy, God's agent for declaring his will to his people was the prophet, who was to minister in like fashion to Moses (Deut 18:15-22). Prophets were to serve as covenant enforcers, calling Israel back to covenant loyalty so that the nation would fulfil its vocational calling. To this end, Israel's story functioned as the norm by which the classical prophets critiqued the nation. Even when speaking of future events, the prophet did so with reference to Israel's past.⁴⁶ Von Rad aptly makes the point:

[W]hen the prophets spoke of coming events, they did not do so directly, out of the blue, as it were; instead, they showed themselves bound to certain definite traditions and therefore even in their words about the future they use a dialectic method which keeps remarkably close to the pattern used by earlier exponents of Jahwism. It is the use of tradition which gives the prophets their legitimation.⁴⁷

Consequently, each stage in Israel's developing story is in some way dependent upon what has gone before. Indeed, the prophets' creative improvisations of the story for their own socio-political context were always to be tested against Israel's received

⁴⁴ Cf. Joshua's farewell address (Josh 23-24); Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple (1 Kgs 8:22-53); the exile of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 17:5-23); and the exile of Judah (2 Kgs 24-25).

⁴⁵ Cf. §3 'What's in a Story?'

⁴⁶ E.g., the return from exile is presented in second-Isaiah as a 'second exodus', and associated in Jeremiah with the establishment of a 'new covenant' (Jer 31:31-34).

⁴⁷ G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* Vol. 2, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1975), 239. For von Rad the 'definite traditions' consist of the Exodus, David, and Zion.

traditions, lest the people be led astray (cf. Deut 13). In this way, Israel's story served not only as the primary resource from which covenantal concepts might be drawn, but also as the mechanism by which prophetic declarations might be judged. Thus, as implied by von Rad above: *any presentation of Israel's self-understanding must demonstrate its continuity with Israel's tradition in order to have any claim of authenticity.*

Significantly, the exodus-exile-return motif is clearly evident in the pre-exilic prophetic literature of the eighth and sixth centuries. Consider, for example, Amos and Hosea, who were called to warn the northern kingdom of Israel of its impending exile at the hand of the Assyrians.⁴⁸ Both prophets identify the exodus event as the founding moment of their story and the basis of YHWH's claim upon them as his people. In Amos, YHWH declares:

I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.¹¹ And I raised up some of your children to be prophets and some of your youths to be nazirites... But you made the nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, "You shall not prophesy."⁴⁹

Likewise, in Hosea, YHWH calls upon the memory of the exodus event and his provision for them in the wilderness in order to indict them for their current disregard for him:

I have been the LORD your God ever since the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.⁵ It was I who fed you in the wilderness, in the land of drought.⁶ When I fed them, they were satisfied; they were satisfied, and their heart was proud; therefore they forgot me.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cf. Robert P. Carroll, 'Deportation and Diasporic Discourses in the Prophetic Literature' in Scott, *Exile*, 63-85 (67-69).

⁴⁹ Amos 2:10-12; abridged.

⁵⁰ Hos 13:4-6.

Israel's unfaithfulness to YHWH and rejection of his prophets invokes the curse of the covenant – the nation is to be ejected from its inheritance. Amos announces the judgement to come: “Israel must go into exile away from the land.”⁵¹ In Hosea, the exile is symbolic of a return to Egyptian slavery – “They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me”⁵² – but includes with it the hope of restoration and the renewal of Israel's initial commitment:

Therefore, I will now allure her, and bring her into the wilderness,
and speak tenderly to her. ... There she shall respond as in the days
of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of
Egypt.⁵³

Redemption rather than judgement is the last word for both prophets. In Hosea, YHWH affirms: “I will heal their disloyalty; I will love them freely, for my anger has turned from them.”⁵⁴ In Amos, hope is extended for the restoration of a united kingdom under a Davidic king (Amos 9:11) with the accompanying promise: “I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them...”⁵⁵

Commencing his prophetic ministry over a century later, Jeremiah also utilises the exodus-exile-return motif, only here it is the southern kingdom of Judah that is on trial. Once again, Israel's story finds clear articulation. With Jerusalem under siege by Nebuchadrezzar's forces, Jeremiah is directed by YHWH to purchase his cousin's field. The instruction puzzles Jeremiah, who has come to see the Babylonian threat as God's judgement upon Judah for the nation's unfaithfulness to the covenant.

⁵¹ Amos 7:11.

⁵² Hos 11:5.

⁵³ Hos 2:14-15.

⁵⁴ Hos 14:4.

⁵⁵ Amos 9:14.

Surely, now was not the time for property investment! Observe exodus and exile themes in Jeremiah's prayer:

After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed... Ah Lord GOD! It is you who made the heavens and the earth... Nothing is too hard for you. ... You brought your people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and wonders... and you gave them this land, which you swore to their ancestors... But they did not obey your voice or walk in your law... Therefore you have made all these disasters come upon them. See, the siege ramps have been cast up against the city to take it... What you spoke has happened... Yet you, O Lord GOD, have said to me, "Buy the field for money and get witnesses" – though the city has been given into the hands of the Chaldeans.⁵⁶

In response, YHWH affirms Jeremiah's account of events: as a consequence of the nation's disloyalty, the city will fall to the Babylonians and Judah will go into exile. But, this is not the end of the story! Judah may have forsaken YHWH, but he had not forsaken them – in due time he will regather them from their place of exile, and restore them to the land. Jeremiah's land purchase anticipates a strong real-estate market in the future.

The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: See, I am the LORD... is anything too hard for me?

Now... concerning this city of which you say, "It is being given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence": See, I am going to gather them from all the lands to which I drove them... I will bring them back to this place, and I will settle them in safety...

Fields shall be bought in this land....⁵⁷

Evidently, for Jeremiah, as with Amos and Hosea, the exodus-exile-return motif was a vehicle for calling Israel to account for its covenantal unfaithfulness, for

⁵⁶ Jer 32:16-25; abridged.

⁵⁷ Jer 32:26-43a; abridged.

announcing the pending judgement, and for extending hope for restoration in the future.

The Story in Israel's Worship and Wisdom Literature

Creation and salvation history themes coalesce particularly in Israel's reflective literature.⁵⁸ Here the creation-uncreation-recreation and exodus-exile-return motifs are expressed in community and individual responses to YHWH in what Brueggemann helpfully classifies as the language of 'orientation', 'disorientation' and 'new orientation'.⁵⁹ The grand turning points in Israel's story are played out in the day to day life of individuals, families and communities.⁶⁰ In the psalter, psalms of 'orientation', which include the creation (e.g., Ps 8), torah (e.g., Ps 119) and wisdom (e.g., Ps 37) psalms, celebrate the orderliness of creation and torah (cf. Ps 19) and anticipate that YHWH's purposes will be realised for all creation and particularly for his people. They function at the societal level to orientate the people of God to a well-ordered, torah-governed life within YHWH's creation and to cultivate the eschatological hope that any present irregularities will eventually conform to YHWH's dictates.⁶¹

In contrast to the psalms of 'orientation', Brueggemann identifies the individual and communal laments as psalms of 'disorientation'. These psalms give voice to the painful cries of those facing the forces of 'uncreation' or enduring the shame of

⁵⁸ Cf. Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, 200-39.

⁵⁹ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A theological commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1984).

⁶⁰ Goldingay correctly observes: "The salvation-history tradition cannot stand on its own; the events it speaks of have to be grounded and applied, and their consequences for ordinary life worked out (Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, 229-30).

⁶¹ Brueggemann, *Psalms*, 27-8. E.g., Ps 37:1-2.

‘exile’. The psalmist’s life experience is not that of the good orderly cosmos where the people of God enjoy the protection and blessing of their covenant LORD. Rather, life has gone awry; from all appearances YHWH has forsaken his covenant people – the wicked, death, destruction and sin are winning the day. These are the cries of those with an authentic “bold faith”, who, in the midst of despair, call upon the faithfulness and justice of their covenant partner to act on their behalf and to vindicate and restore his people once again.⁶² The conviction is that YHWH always has the last word and most lament psalms conclude with an expression of confidence in YHWH’s capacity and willingness to act on behalf of is troubled people.⁶³

Psalms of ‘new orientation’ celebrate YHWH’s deliverance. Individual and communal thanksgiving songs function to reorientate the people of God to YHWH’s purposes in view of the past calamities. The thanksgiving song “is often a lament recited now from the side of resolution, but with the remembered trouble still quite visible.”⁶⁴ This is not a return to the pre-tribulation ‘orientation’; there can be no “going back”.⁶⁵ Life does not return as it was previously; recent failings and/or disasters are not denied, but recast in view of YHWH’s redemptive activity. The ‘new orientation’ necessarily embraces and is informed by YHWH’s recent work of salvation. Thus, while the Psalter offers reflection upon the critical turning points of Israel’s story – exodus (Ps 78), exile (Ps 137), and return (Ps 126) – this grand narrative also functions in the Psalter as a paradigm for corporate and individual reflection upon everyday life experiences.

⁶² Brueggemann, *Psalms*, 52.

⁶³ Psalm 88 is an uncompromising exemption; the psalmist remains in the place of despair, ‘abandoned’ by YHWH, yet nonetheless stays engaged through persistent prayer – ultimately, it is only YHWH who can bring resolution.

⁶⁴ Brueggemann, *Psalms*, 124.

⁶⁵ Brueggemann, *Psalms*, 124.

Brueggemann's 'orientation-disorientation-new orientation' motif is also evident in Israel's wisdom literature, where the positive 'orientation' presented in the book of Proverbs with its guidelines for the successful life is called into question through the musings of *qoheleth* whose life-long search ultimately finds life 'under the sun' to be meaningless. Life "east of Eden" is marked by ambiguity.⁶⁶ 'Disorientation' results as the confident assertions of the wise unravel in view of complexities of life and the book of Ecclesiastes closes with no solution to the dilemma save the editor's final admonition to fear God who is the ultimate judge of human thought and action (Eccl 12:13-4). The unspeakable sufferings of righteous Job likewise challenge the stock answers of Israel's sages as manifest particularly in the responses of Job's friends. Although the book does not resolve the issue of Job's suffering, it does point the reader beyond the confines of the wisdom tradition to divine theophany as a way through the impasse. The theophany event "brings no new data for the resolution of the book's theological question, but it brings Job to a trustful submission to Yahweh through the experience of being personally confronted by him."⁶⁷ Job's 'new orientation' materialises only as a consequence of divine encounter, in a manner similar to that of the psalmists. When read together, Israel's canonical wisdom literature reflects the same 'orientation-disorientation-new orientation' motif that Brueggemann observes in the Psalter. Granting the unique perspective Israel's wisdom and worship literature brings to the nation's received traditions, it is apparent that Israel's perception of daily life and experience from the view point of the individual, the family, and the community was inevitably shaped by Israel's grand narrative.

⁶⁶ Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, 224-25.

⁶⁷ Goldingay, *Theological Diversity*, 208.

The Story and Israel's Self-understanding

There is a complex dynamic evidenced in Israel's received traditions between the 'story' that defined a 'people', and a 'people', who shaped their 'story'. Israel's identity is not static, but rather evolves over the course of the biblical narrative. The phenomenon leads Davies to note: "The Bible's 'Israel' is a rather complicated kind of thing. Indeed, we should really speak of its 'Israels'." ⁶⁸

The term 'Israel' initially referred to the patriarch Jacob, who was renamed Israel after an encounter with God (Gen 32:22-32), and subsequently to his descendants, who through the exodus, covenant and conquest became 'the people of YHWH', a holy nation with their own constitution and land (Exod 1-15; 19-24; Josh 1-12). In the Deuteronomistic History, 'Israel' refers variously to: the loose confederacy of tribes during the period of the judges; the united religio-political kingdom, under Saul, David and Solomon; and finally, the apostate northern kingdom (Israel/Ephraim). With respect to the latter, the unfaithful northern kingdom of Israel is juxtaposed with, and carefully distinguished from, the southern kingdom of Judah to whom the promises of YHWH are now said to pertain. YHWH's covenant with David and his offspring (2 Sam 7), and the election of Zion as the 'place' that YHWH would establish his name (Pss 74:2; 132:13-14; cf., Deut 12) served to vindicate the house of Judah over the house of Israel as the focal point of YHWH's activity. Matthews suggests that the David and Zion traditions were "quite likely... an innovation of the Solomonic court designed to strengthen the authority of the

⁶⁸ Philip Davies, 'The History of Ancient Israel and Judah', *ExpT* 119.1 (2007): 15-21 (17).

rulers of the Davidic dynasty, even in the face of the division of the kingdom.”⁶⁹

From the perspective of the prophets, this did not leave the tribes of the northern Kingdom without hope, but as Amos (9:11-15) in the eighth century and Ezekiel (37:15-28) in the sixth proclaimed, their redemption would include their reunification with Judah and resubmission once again to the Davidic king.

Not all scripture writers maintained the Deuteronomistic Historian’s restricted political definition for ‘Israel’, but utilised the term with religious connotations to denote more specially – ‘YHWH’s covenant people’. Psalm 78, for example, recounts salvation history from the exodus to the building of the temple in order to present YHWH’s election of Judah, Zion and David as the fitting continuation of Israel’s story and thus validating them as symbols of ‘faithful Israel’.⁷⁰

He rejected the tent of Joseph, he did not choose the tribe of Ephraim; but he chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion, which he loves. He built his sanctuary like the high heavens, like the earth, which he has founded forever. He chose his servant David, and took him from the sheepfolds; from tending the nursing ewes he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel, his inheritance (Ps 78:67-71).

The traditions of David and Zion are incorporated into the exodus tradition establishing the people who sit under Davidic rule and who worship YHWH on Zion, his holy mount, as the true descendants of Jacob – ‘true Israel’. Employed in this manner, ‘Israel’ refers to the people who identify with and stand in continuity with the community who entered into covenant with YHWH at Sinai. In short, ‘Israel’ in this sense refers to the people of the story, but it is the story *as shaped* by the very

⁶⁹ Victor H. Matthews, *Old Testament Turning Points: The Narratives that Shaped a Nation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 150.

⁷⁰ “Ps 78 refers to the story from the exodus to the building of the temple in a free way and presupposes some embellishing compared with the version of the story in Exodus – 1 Samuel” (John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology: Israel’s Gospel* Vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2003), 466, n. 28).

people who claim it as their own. Indeed, only by means of creative improvisation of its traditions could Judah maintain the claim to be 'Israel'.

Similarly, the social and religious challenge facing the post-exilic community likewise centred upon forging its identity as the 'people of YHWH'. The Babylonian exile had shattered the belief in Zion's invincibility, and the city of God that greeted the returnees lay in ruin. What distinguished this community as 'true Israel'? With the exodus-exile-return motif imbedded in their sacred traditions, the hope that God would restore his people from their place of exile was given concrete expression through the adoption of Cyrus, the Persian king, as YHWH's anointed servant to redeem the exiles, and the attribution of Cyrus' military and political successes to the favour of YHWH (Isa 45:1-5). The Persian king's strategic policy to allow communities exiled under Babylonian hegemony to return to their native homelands and to restore the worship of their deities, was interpreted by the returnees as evidence of YHWH's sovereignty over pagan rulers. The decree of Cyrus was retold "from their own theological perspective, with only casual resemblance to the standard bureaucratic style or to Cyrus's actual text,"⁷¹ with the result that it became YHWH's commission for the exiles to return to Jerusalem (2 Chron 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4). There was no doubting the matter; the return to the land had divine sanction – YHWH was restoring from the exiled descendants of Judah, Benjamin and Levi his purified remnant (Ezra 1:5; 9:8, cf., Zeph 3:12-13; Jer 23:3).

Further galvanising the returnees' identity were the concrete symbols evoking the faith and life of earlier generations. Through the encouragement of the post-exilic

⁷¹ Matthews, *Turning Points*, 171.

prophets, YHWH's sanctuary was rebuilt on Mount Zion (Hos 1:1-15; Zech 4:8-10) and Jerusalem re-established as the centre of the cult. The temple provided a constant reminder of the Zion tradition and reaffirmed to the worshippers that YHWH had chosen Jerusalem to be his holy city. Moreover, while Zerubbabel, who was a descendant of David (1 Chron 3:19), served as the Persian appointed governor of Yehud, the Davidic tradition could also be evoked and indeed did encourage the prophetic hope that, together with the high priest Joshua, Zerubbabel would be the one to realise the former promises made to David (Hos 2:20-23; Zech 3:1-4:14; cf., 2 Sam 7). Together, Zerubbabel and Joshua did succeed in completing the temple; however, the royal aspirations did not materialise – Zerubbabel slipped into obscurity and Yehud remained a province of the Persian empire.⁷²

Perhaps the most defining symbol for the returnees, however, was the celebration of the Passover feast (Ezra 6:19-22; cf., Exod 12; Deut 16). The festival not only served to commemorate the exodus event but was the means by which the post-exilic community participated in that event. "In every generation one must look upon oneself as if one had in one's own person come out of Egypt."⁷³ The Passover enshrined the exodus event in the returnees' social memory affirming their heritage and current status as YHWH's people. Blenkinsopp suggests that "social memory is shaped, sustained, and transmitted to a great extent by non-inscribed practices including rituals of re-enactment, commemorative ceremonies, bodily gestures and the like."⁷⁴ Of all Israel's feasts and festivals, the Passover is the most defining since the stipulations specifying who may or may not participate in the celebration

⁷² Iain Provan et al., *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2003), 288-90.

⁷³ Joseph Blenkinsopp, 'Memory, Tradition, and the Construction of the Past in Ancient Israel', *BTB* 27 (1997): 76-82 (79).

⁷⁴ Blenkinsopp, 'Memory', 78.

(Exod 12:43-49) in effect determine who is a legitimate member of the covenant community. To participate in the Passover is to experience afresh YHWH's redemption and to affirm membership within YHWH's elect people.

The very story and symbols that forged the identity of the post-exilic community thus served conversely to ostracise others. Zerubbabel rejected the offer of help from the 'people of the land'⁷⁵ on account that they had neither "experienced the purification of the exile"⁷⁶ nor were they the recipients of the directive from Cyrus. In short, Zerubbabel did not consider them to be legitimate members of YHWH's people. Thus, while only a minority of Jewish families returned from Babylonian exile, their experience became the governing paradigm for what it was to be the people of God.⁷⁷ The issue over just who qualified for membership in the covenant community resurfaced almost a century later over the question of mixed marriages (Ezra 9-10). On his return to Jerusalem, Ezra insisted upon the dissolution of all marriages to non-Jews and sought to cultivate a vision for 'Israel' along racial lines.

Ezra's policy of an ethically exclusive 'Israel', while apparently a dominant voice for the post-exilic community, is not without its detractors within the collective remembered tradition. Third-Isaiah anticipated the inclusion of eunuchs and foreigners within the restored community and the new temple to function as a place of prayer for all peoples (Isa 56:1-8). The purpose of 'Israel's' restoration was to draw the nations into its light (Isa 60:3), indeed the ultimate goal was the renewal of

⁷⁵ In Ezra 4:1-4, "the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin" identify themselves as those whom "King Esar-haddon of Assyria" had transported there, an event that occurred following the Assyrian exile of the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BCE. It is probable that those from the kingdom of Judah who survived the siege but were not taken into exile intermingled with this group. Cf. Provan et al., *History*, 293-94.

⁷⁶ Matthews, *Turning Points*, 171.

⁷⁷ Jacob Neusner, 'Exile and Return as the History of Judaism' in Scott, *Exile*, 221-37.

heaven and earth (Isa 65:17). Likewise, the book of Jonah sought to remind the covenant community of its missional role beyond its own ethnic boundaries, and, standing in sharp relief to Ezra's policy, the narrative of Ruth encouraged a concept of 'Israel' marked by inclusivity and less regulated by racial descent alone. The presence of these "minority voices" in the remembered tradition "is a testament to the diversity of how Israel told its story."⁷⁸

Ultimately, the post-exilic community looked to YHWH's return to Zion for vindication as 'true Israel'. Ezekiel had received a vision of YHWH's glory departing from the Solomonic temple prior to its destruction by the Babylonians (Ezek 10:4-5, 18-19; 11:22-24), but anticipated YHWH's glory to return to and fill the new temple (Ezek 43:1-5). The exilic and post-exilic prophets viewed YHWH's return as the culminating event of their restoration (cf., Isa 40:9-10; 52:7-8; 60:1-2, 19-20). Haggai predicted that the glory of the second temple would greatly exceed that of the first (Hag 2:6-9), and Zechariah that YHWH would return once again and that Jerusalem would be finally restored as YHWH's dwelling place (Zech 2:10-11; 8:3). However, close to a century later, YHWH's return had yet to eventuate and the Jews and Jerusalem were still awaiting their vindication. Malachi pointed to the community's covenantal unfaithfulness and prophesied that YHWH would send a messenger ahead of him to prepare the people for his coming (Mal 3:1). In Malachi, the question as to who would be vindicated as 'faithful Israel' is raised once again – only those purified by means of the messenger's ministry will be vindicated at YHWH's return, the unrepentant can expect judgement (Mal 3:16-4:3).

⁷⁸ Matthews, *Turning Points*, 180.

Davies is correct to assert that “[t]he Bible’s ‘Israel’ is a rather complicated kind of thing.”⁷⁹ Even if we isolate the use of the term to where it denotes ‘YHWH’s covenant people’ – ‘true Israel’ – the identity of those claiming this ascription morphs throughout the biblical story. Nonetheless, it is evident that the claim to be ‘true Israel’ is validated through careful improvisation of the sacred traditions which are interpreted and reapplied for the particular *Sitz im Leben* of subsequent generations. To be ‘Israel’ is to be the people of the biblical story, but at the same time, the story has been shaped and extended by the very people who identify themselves through it. This complex relationship between the biblical story and the people who claim it as their own is clearly evidenced within Israel’s sacred traditions and is also observable in the Jewish literature from the late second-temple period. Below we offer a brief description of the Qumran writings as a test case.

The Story and the Scrolls: Improvisation in the late second-temple period

The literature of the Qumran community reveals an unwavering conviction that they were the true heirs of Israel’s sacred traditions – they were ‘true Israel’. They demonstrate their continuity with Israel’s story by locating their own origins and experience within this larger narrative and imagine their own destiny to be its fitting denouement. The Damascus Document (CD),⁸⁰ for example, makes explicit chronological links with Israel’s past and identifies the emergence of the community with the remnant that God preserved through the Babylonian exile:

⁷⁹ Davies, ‘History’, 17.

⁸⁰ The document is so named from the references within the writing to the ‘land of Damascus’ as the location of the new covenant community. ‘Damascus’ appears to be used figuratively of their ‘exile’ in the Judean wilderness. Cf. C. Marvin Pate, *Communities of the Last Days: The Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament and the Story of Israel* (Leicester: Apollos, 2000), 44.

Listen now all you who know righteousness, and consider the works of God; for he has a dispute with all flesh and will condemn all those who despise him.

For when they were unfaithful and forsook him, he hid his face from Israel and his sanctuary and delivered them up to the sword. But remembering the covenant of the forefathers, he left a remnant to Israel and did not deliver it up to be destroyed. And in the age of wrath, three hundred and ninety years after he had given them into the hand of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, he visited them, and he caused a plant root to spring from Israel and Aaron to inherit his land and to prosper on the good things of his earth. And they perceived their iniquity and recognized that they were guilty men, yet for twenty years they were like blind men groping for the way. And God observed their deeds, that they sought him with a whole heart, and he raised for them a Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the way of his heart.⁸¹

The exhortation identifies a 390-year period from the Babylonian exile until the early stages of the community's formation. If this date is to be taken literally and as a precise figure, both of which are by no means certain, 390 years after the destruction of the temple in 587/6 BCE suggests a date of 197/6 BCE. Add to this the 20 years of "groping for the way" and one arrives at the date 177/6 BCE for the rise of the Teacher of Righteousness. It may have been the case, however, that the community calculated a shorter post-exilic period, similar to that of the third-century Jewish chronographer Demetrius, in which case the community originated approximately 171 BCE, very close to the crisis that broke-out during the reign of Antiochus IV, a time aptly described as the "age of wrath", and the Teacher of Righteousness arrived on the scene shortly after Jonathan Maccabeus usurped the role of high-priest (152 BCE).⁸² The latter has become the traditional hypothesis.

⁸¹ CD I:1-11. All DSS translations are from Vermes, *Scrolls* unless otherwise noted.

⁸² The Egyptian-based Demetrius "calculated that there were 338 years between the exile of Judah (587/6 BCE) and Ptolemy IV (222 BCE)", a variance of 26 years from modern reckonings (John J. Collins, 'The Expectation of the End in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (eds.), *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 74-90 (84)).

This traditional hypothesis is not without its critics, however, and Collins for one suggests rather that the 390 year figure may be symbolic, based on Ezek 4:5 where it depicts the period of punishment for the house of Israel, and employed in the Damascus Document to situate the community within Daniel's eschatological programme.⁸³ The 'seventy-week' schema (10 Jubilees or 490 years) in Daniel 9:24 was influential for the community (cf. 11QMelch 7), who anticipated the *eschaton* to arrive approximately 40 years after the death of the Teacher of Righteousness (CD 20:13-16). Adding together the 390 years from exile to the origin of the community, the 20 years "groping for the way", 40 years as a round figure for the ministry of the Teacher of Righteousness and a further 40 years until the *eschaton* equates to Daniel's 490 years. Pate concedes: "This may be coincidence, but it is consistent with the sectarians' belief that they were living in the last generation, just prior to or at the beginning of the great messianic war (1QM)." ⁸⁴

However one accounts for the chronological indicators in the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is clearly evident that the Qumran community determined to identify itself as the faithful representatives of YHWH's people living during the period approaching the consummation. By linking the formation of the community to the remnant in exile, the writer of the Damascus Document asserted that the community's story was inseparable from the story of their ancestors. Indeed, the community's story was the continuation of the former narrative, which was reaching its conclusion in and through the community itself.

⁸³ Collins, 'Expectation', 83-85. See also Martin G. Abegg, Jr., 'Exile and the Dead Sea Scrolls' in Scott, *Exile*, 111-25 (119-20).

⁸⁴ Pate, *Communities*, 220.

It is noteworthy that the point of departure from Israel's story is the commencement of exile, not the physical return precipitated by Cyrus' decree. This is theologically important, for the community viewed itself as the faithful remnant of which the prophets had spoken, who remained, symbolically, *still in exile*.⁸⁵ Isaiah of Jerusalem had spoken previously of the establishment of a righteous remnant in the midst of a nation polluted by corrupt rulers, priests and prophets. YHWH would lay "in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation" (Isa 28:16). The community's council, it was claimed, was the fulfilment of this prophecy (1QS VIII.5-7). The appointment of twelve men along with three priests to the council of the community no doubt was to represent the twelve tribes of Israel (1QS VII.1).

The community likewise evoked second-Isaiah's new exodus motif. The location of the sect in the Judean wilderness was a deliberate enactment of Isaiah 40:3 – they were the "in the wilderness prepar[ing] the way of the Lord." They viewed themselves as the eschatological community whose teaching and faithful service would usher in YHWH's glorious return. Accordingly, new members were instructed to:

separate from the habitation of unjust men and go into the wilderness to prepare there the way of him; as it is written, *Prepare in the wilderness the way of ..., make straight in the desert a path for our God* (Isa. xl, 3). This (path) is the study of the law which he commanded by the hand of Moses, that they may do according to all that has been revealed from age to age, and as the prophets have revealed by his Holy Spirit.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Cf. Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'The Concept of Restoration in the Dead Sea Scrolls' in Scott, *Restoration*, 203-21.

⁸⁶ 1QS VIII.14-15; cf. 1QS IX.20; emphasis belongs to Vermes' edition and marks the quotation.

The exodus-exile-return motif was utilised effectively to distinguish themselves from their fellow Jews, but now with a specific eschatological tenor.⁸⁷ The community members believed that their fellow countrymen were walking in rebellion, being led astray by the Scoffer or Wicked Priest⁸⁸ and consequently were still under the curse of the covenant. The community, by way of contrast, consisted of the repentant, those whom God had graciously restored in the last days and had provided the correct interpretation of the law through the agency of the Teacher of Righteousness (CD I.11-18a). In true deuteronomistic fashion⁸⁹ the community called its adherents to repentance:

The priests shall recite the favours of God... his merciful grace to Israel, and the Levites shall recite the iniquities of the children of Israel... during the dominion of Belial. And after them, all those entering the covenant shall confess and say: ... 'We and our fathers before us have sinned... [And God has] judged us and our fathers also; but he has bestowed his bountiful mercy on us...' ⁹⁰

A clear eschatological dualism is evident in the above passage. The present age is under the dominion of Belial, the ultimate enemy of God and his people. The community saw itself as those who had come out from under his rule and are now under the reign of God. As such they were recipients of the covenant blessings, while covenant curses continued to reside upon the children of Belial, which included rebellious Jews and gentiles. Consequently, in the community's improvisation of the ancient tradition, the covenantal blessing no longer pertains

⁸⁷ Cf. Pate, *Communities*, 87-91; Schiffman, 'Restoration', 220.

⁸⁸ The principal Jewish enemy of the Teacher of Righteousness is variously designated in the DSS as "the 'Scoffer', the 'Liar', the 'Spouter of Lies' and the 'Wicked Priest' (1QpHab, 4QpPs^a, CD)" which most likely refer to the one individual, Jonathan Maccabeus, who, even though was not of Zadokite lineage, usurped the role of high-priest (152-143 BCE) (Vermes, *Scrolls*, 60-2).

⁸⁹ Cf. Deut 27:11-28:14; Josh 8:30-35.

⁹⁰ 1QS I.20-II.1; abridged.

specifically to the possession of the land, but to the climax of Israel's story – the consummation of the kingdom of God.

The priests shall bless all the men of the lot of God..., saying 'May he bless you with all good and preserve you from evil! ...May he raise his merciful face towards you for everlasting bliss!'

And the Levites shall curse all the men of the lot of Belial, saying: 'Be cursed because of all your guilty wickedness! ...Be damned in the shadowy place of everlasting fire!'⁹¹

As noted above, entrance into the covenant community required not just a commitment to the law, but in particular to the community's interpretation of the law. The new recruit "shall undertake by a binding oath to return with all his heart and soul to every commandment of the law of Moses *in accordance with all that has been revealed of it to the sons of Zadok...*"⁹² It was no longer just the law of Moses, but their own presentation of the law that was authoritative, and it was to remain so until the 'end of the age' (1QS IX.10-11). Thus, while the community could gladly point to the law and claim faithfulness to its decrees, it is not difficult also to identify discontinuity in their teachings with respect to the same law.

This self-claim to possess the only authoritative reading of scripture enabled the community to sever ties with one of the central symbols of Israel's tradition – the temple and its related cultus. It was certainly not the first time the temple and the priesthood had been called into question,⁹³ neither was it the first time that the virtues of inner repentance had been lauded over and above animal sacrifice.⁹⁴ Turning its

⁹¹ 1QS II.2-9; abridged.

⁹² 1QS V.9. Emphasis added.

⁹³ Cf. Jer 7.

⁹⁴ Cf. Ps 51:15-17.

back on the Jerusalem cult, the Qumran community proclaimed atonement by means of penitent prayer and righteous living (1QS IX.4-5).

The Qumran community thus stood in both continuity and discontinuity with its past traditions. Its claim to be ‘true Israel’ could only be achieved through radical improvisation of their ‘remembered past’, where Israel’s story was retold with the community’s own beginnings and experience woven in as the fitting conclusion to the overall plot. Without question, the community’s self-understanding was informed by the story, but the story was also refashioned from the community’s perspective. The Torah was cherished as a defining symbol, although its application was restricted to the community’s own interpretation, but the temple and its cultus were rejected as corrupt and the community’s own holiness and praxis instituted as a means of atoning for sin. Ultimately, however, the community of the Scrolls looked to YHWH’s return for final vindication, which they understood was already on the horizon. Tragically, on this critical point their predictions proved false, resulting in their own demise in the first Roman-Jewish war (70 CE). Nevertheless, their literature fortunately survived and demonstrates the continuing influence of Israel’s story upon the Jewish worldview during the late second-temple period. The Dead Sea Scrolls offer insight into the exegetical activity of Jews living contemporaneously with Jesus and the early church, and thus are instructive for our reading of the Synoptic Gospels, to which we turn in Part B.

§5 Summary – Part A: The Hermeneutic of ‘Story’

Our interest in the ‘story of Israel’ as a hermeneutical principle has its genesis in the thesis of N.T. Wright. Wright argues that the narrative framework of Israel’s scriptures articulates the worldview of late second-temple Jews and that Jesus, as depicted in the Synoptic writings, deliberately evoked this story as a means of demonstrating in word and action his own eschatological vision for the nation. We illustrated Wright’s approach in §2 ‘The ‘Coming of the Son of Man’: Literal or Metaphorical?’ with specific attention to his reading of the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying in Mark 13 and parallels. Wright understands the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying to be a metaphor that depicts the vindication of Jesus and his followers as the ‘true Israel’ and which must be understood in conjunction with the demise of the Jerusalem temple. Specifically, the ‘desolating sacrilege’, ‘cosmic signs’ and the ‘coming of the son of man’ in Mark 13 all have the destruction of the temple in 70 CE as the historical and eschatological referent. Wright’s hypothesis serves as the point of departure for our own investigation, which offers a critique of his interpretation by exploring the nexus between the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying and the destruction of the temple in each of the Synoptic traditions.

In outlining his methodology for investigating the historical Jesus, Wright suggests that his concept of ‘story’ has sufficient capacity to embrace and engage with historical, theological and literary inquiries as they pertain to the task of biblical studies and thus provide a richer and more comprehensive perspective on the subject matter. In the opening discussion of §3 ‘What’s in a Story?’ our brief analysis of Wright’s methodology identified a series of questions / issues requiring further

investigation, the results of which shape and qualify ‘story’ as we employ it in Part B of the thesis. Thus, while we have adopted Wright’s concept, we mould it independently of Wright’s own thought. The chief focus in the subsequent sub-chapters has been to clarify the concept of ‘story’ by addressing aspects *not* specifically explored by Wright. Our approach in these chapters might be likened to that of a navigator taking bearings from surrounding astronomical constellations or geographical formations. We have charted our journey by utilising the arguments of others as a frame of reference. The intent has not been to develop our own theory of historiography, or our own doctrine of scripture, or our own hermeneutic, but to identify in the work of others a system of thought within which we can clarify the concept of ‘story’ as we seek to employ it.

Clarifying the relationship between ‘Israel’s scriptures’, the ‘story of Israel’, and the ‘history of Israel’ was the particular task in §3.1 ‘Story and Historical Studies’. Here our enquiry led to the adoption of Assmann’s concept of ‘mnemohistory’, by means of which Israel’s scriptures may be understood to be the authoritative record of the nation’s ‘remembered past.’ The exploration of a community’s mnemohistory is a valid form of historical investigation, which may then be laid beside other lines of historical enquiry for comparison and critique. The expression ‘story of Israel’ may then be defined in terms of Israel’s mnemohistory as derived from the nation’s authoritative traditions. From the variety of writings within Israel’s biblical tradition, the historian, in a fashion similar to that of a lawyer in the courtroom, reconstructs a ‘meta-story’ that best accounts for the evidence. The ‘story of Israel’, therefore, is not to be equated with Israel’s scriptures themselves, but must be understood as a

historical construct – a historiography in narrative form that depicts the storyline of Israel’s ‘remembered past’ as articulated in the nation’s sacred writings.

Wright does not develop a doctrine of scripture and so leaves the relationship between ‘canon’, ‘story’ and the notion of ‘revelation’ largely unexplored. In §3.2 ‘Story and Theological Studies’ we adopted the theological method of Vanhoozer which understands scripture as a ‘divine communicative act’. What distinguishes the canonical writings from other religious writings is the belief that God appropriates these particular writings as his own divine discourse to provide both the authoritative testimony to the economy of the triune God in creation and redemption, and the script by which the people of God might participate in this unfolding drama. Divine self-revelation is thus but one of the many divine uses of scripture wrought by the efficacy of the Spirit. Our knowledge of God is always partial, mediated by the agency of the Spirit through the diverse canonical writings.

Recognition of the pluriform nature of the canon is critical to Vanhoozer’s postfoundationalist theology, which argues that each genre offers its own irreplaceable perspective on reality. With respect to Vanhoozer’s doctrine of scripture we defined ‘story’ as the plot or storyline of the script, and the ‘story of Israel’ as the plot evident in Israel’s scriptures. From this perspective, ‘story’ is a theological construct related to, but independent of, the canonical writings themselves and as such might be variously construed. The ‘story of Israel’ is not a medium of revelation but the storyline of Israel’s sacred writings which are a form of divine discourse.

The historical and theological enquiries identified above assume that the biblical texts are a reliable *medium* of testimony. The capacity for texts to function as a means of human-to-human and divine-to-human communication was given consideration in §3.3 ‘Story and Literary Studies’. The collapse of the historical paradigm in biblical hermeneutics and the radical postmodern charge that all texts are indeterminate necessitates the formation of a comprehensive hermeneutic to support the belief in texts as a faithful medium for communication and to outline the nature of the interpretative task and the ethics for appropriate practice. Having found Vanhoozer’s theological method of some benefit, we continued with Vanhoozer to explore and ultimately also adopt his *special* trinitarian hermeneutic which views scripture as equally a human and divine ‘communicative act’.

For Vanhoozer, the hermeneutical question is fundamentally a theological one, to which he responds with a theological hermeneutic. His ‘covenant of discourse’ affirms the real presence of the author’s voice in the text and exhorts the reader to attend to this by engaging with what the author has done in and by writing. In brief, a text is a ‘communicative act’ between covenant partners, where the author and reader are called to covenantal faithfulness. Texts are therefore considered potentially determinate although a reader’s understanding will always be partial and open to correction. Sufficiently ‘thick’ descriptions of a text attend to historical and literary contextual issues *and* consider the generic and canonical force of the text. Priority is given to the final form of the text for it is only when the text is viewed as a whole that some aspects of the generic force become most evident. At its thickest level of description the significance of the text is evaluated in view of the overall plot of the canon. From the perspective of the New Testament writers we understand this

plot to be the ‘story of Israel’, specifically, the plot of the theo-drama’s script and Israel’s ‘remembered past’ as developed in Israel’s sacred traditions.

The ultimate goal of scripture is the cultivation of appropriate performance of the text so that the people of God fittingly participate in the activity of God in the world. Our particular interest is the improvisation evident within the canon itself, which was the focus of §4 ‘The Making of Israel’s Story’. In this chapter we examined the intertexture within Israel’s scriptures and observed with Fishbane the manner in which the biblical tradition developed by means of its transmission. As later generations appropriated earlier traditions for their own milieu some of their own improvisations were absorbed into the tradition itself. Israel’s story thus developed via the act of improvisation.

Evidently, Israel’s story offered the broad narrative that shaped the worldview of the people of God, and provided a sense of heritage and corporate identity that directed the lives of the people. At the same time, we noted the complex nature of the relationship between the story and the people who claimed it as their own. The make-up of those who claimed to be ‘true Israel’ morphed over time. Creative improvisation of Israel’s story was necessary not only to adapt the sacred tradition for a new historical-cultural context, but also to demonstrate continuity with the ancestors who had originally entered into covenant relationship with YHWH. In situating themselves and their experiences *within* the story, later generations made the story their own, thus legitimating their own role as the true recipients of the promises YHWH made to their ancestors. In short, to claim continuity with the story was equally to claim to be ‘true Israel’. As is evident in the writings of the Qumran

community, this phenomenon continued into the late second-temple period and is thus highly instructive for reading the literature of the period, including the Synoptic Gospels.

Israel's story, as has already been noted, is a theological-historical construct, and might be variously depicted. Our aim was not to offer a comprehensive account of this story, but rather to sketch the major turning points discernable within Israel's sacred traditions. We observed that the exodus-exile-return motif prefaced by the creation-uncreation-recreation theme provides the nexus about which the storyline unfolds. Importantly, the restoration of the created order coalesces with Israel's hope for the return from exile and the expectation of YHWH's glorious return to Israel. Israel's scriptures conclude with the post-exilic community back in the land but with their full restoration, and that of the created world, still awaiting the return of YHWH to be fully realised. Already evident in the Old Testament corpus is the forging of an eschatological hope that anticipates that the drama's plot is reaching its denouement.

We are now in a place to embark on our study of the Synoptic Gospels themselves and to read these as the literature of those who inhabit the 'story of Israel' and who seek to improvise these ancient traditions for their own day. This story is the primary influence shaping their worldview, through which they understand their own continuity with Israel's past and by which they seek to understand the significance of the events transpiring in their present, in particular, the Jesus event. Understandably, the Jesus tradition is remembered within the context of Israel's story.

Part B:

Exegetical Analysis

§6 Story and the Synoptic Traditions

Introduction

We observed in Part A how the concept of ‘story’ was an integral component of N.T. Wright’s methodology. Although Wright’s broader concern lies with ‘Christian origins and the question of God’, in *Jesus and the Victory of God* his attention turns specifically to the identity of the historical Jesus.¹ To aid his historical enquiry, Wright enlists the criterion of ‘double dissimilarity and double similarity’ that argues that Jesus must have been both similar and dissimilar to late second-temple Judaism, which was the immediate context for his own life and ministry, and to early Christianity, which emerged after him. The concept of ‘Israel’s story’ is a means by which Wright can identify and discuss the complex worldview of the variegated Judaisms during the time of Jesus. In brief: Israel’s story is the articulation of the late second-temple Jewish worldview. Jesus’ own mindset may then be explored by analysing his engagement through word and deed with the cultural and religious stories, symbols, praxis and questions of the Jews of his day.² For Wright, the primary sources for constructing Israel’s story and the historical Jesus are Israel’s scriptures and the Synoptic Gospels respectively.³ Part A of this thesis was dedicated to exploring and clarifying the concept of ‘Israel’s story’; in this opening chapter of Part B we consider its particular relevance for reading the Synoptic Gospels.

¹ The text is volume two of his projected six volume series: *Christian Origins and the Question of God*.

² See the discussion of Wright’s methodology in §2 ‘The ‘Coming of the Son of Man’: Literal or Metaphorical?’ and §3 ‘What’s in a Story?’.

³ With respect to the story of Israel, Wright states: “The foundation story of Judaism, to which all other stories were subsidiary was of course the story in the Bible” (Wright, *NTPG*, 216). We will engage with Wright’s use of the Synoptic Gospels for historical Jesus research below.

In the Synoptic tradition, Jesus of Nazareth takes centre stage, but our argument is that the Synoptic writers tell the Jesus story within the context of Israel's story, and that an eye to the latter is critical for a sensitive reading of the Synoptic accounts. It is argued that the traditioning process witnessed in Israel's sacred writings and in the Qumran scrolls is likewise evident in the Synoptic tradition where one can observe reapplication of earlier texts in light of the Jesus event. The controlling hermeneutic in these cases, it will be argued, is Israel's story itself and the aim to situate Jesus firmly within that story and indeed as the climax of that story. Moreover, we suggest that a similar traditioning process to that which took place in the making of Israel's story is observable within the Jesus tradition itself as the early disciples told and retold the story of Jesus, initially orally but eventually via written performances.

In our discussion below, we continue our critique of Wright's methodological approach, by drawing from the insights gained from Part A and in dialogue with James Dunn's more recently published *Jesus Remembered*.⁴ Both Wright and Dunn are conservatives within the contemporary 'third quest' and share much in common. However, there are also important differences between the two, and an examination of these will sharpen our concept of 'story' as it applies to the study of the Synoptic Gospels.

⁴ James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

The Synoptic Tradition and the Jesus Tradition

Jesus research has come a long way since Bultmann confidently asserted:

I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.⁵

Bultmann's comment encapsulates the dominant perspective of the 'no quest' period where it was believed to be neither possible nor necessary to know the historical Jesus.⁶ What mattered was the Christ of faith as proclaimed in the *kerygma* of the early church and who is encountered by faith in the present. For Bultmann, the Synoptic tradition reflects the theology of the early church and offers no access to the life of Jesus itself. However, it was his own student, Ernest Käsemann, who recognised the theological import of the historical Jesus for Christian faith and practice, and in 1953, in a persuasive address to Bultmann's former students, Käsemann argued:

[W]e... cannot do away with the identity between the exalted and the earthly Lord without falling into docetism and depriving ourselves of the possibility of drawing a line between the Easter faith and myth."⁷

The so called 'new quest' was thus birthed out of theological concerns – Käsemann sought to address what he saw in dialectic theology to be an inherent short-coming

⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans. Louise P. Smith and Erminie H. Lanter (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 8. Few if any today would disagree with Bultmann that Jesus' personality is inaccessible to modern enquiry, but his view that the Christian writings show no interest in the life of Jesus has been rightly challenged. Cf. James H. Charlesworth, 'The Historical Jesus', in *HSHJ* Vol. 1, 91-128 (125-26).

⁶ The history of Jesus research has been variously construed, but may be outlined in terms of five phases: 1) Pre-critical (26 CE-1738 CE; from the apostles to Reimarus); 2) The Old Quest (1738 CE - 1906 CE; from Reimarus to Schweitzer); 3) The No Quest (1906 CE - 1953 CE; from Schweitzer to Käsemann); 4) The New Quest (1953 CE- c. 1970 CE; from Käsemann to Third Questers, e.g., Sanders, Wright); 5) The Third Quest (c. 1980 CE - present). Cf. James H. Charlesworth, 'The Historical Jesus', 91-95; Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (London: SCM, 1998), 1-12.

⁷ Ernest Käsemann, *Essays on New Testament Themes*, trans. W.J. Montague (London: SCM, 1964), 34.

created as a consequence of delineating too sharply between the Christ of faith and the Jesus of history. Noting that the *kerygma* of the early church identified the earthly Jesus with the exalted Lord, he exhorted his audience to do likewise and to identify the authentic Jesus tradition within the Gospel tradition. For ‘new quest’ advocates, the Gospels, while not histories as such, do contain authentic Jesus tradition which can be identified through critical analysis and the application of appropriate criteria.⁸ One particular concern of the ‘new quest’ was to distinguish Jesus from the Judaism of his day as a means of explaining the subsequent emergence of the church.

The ‘new quest’ was largely a phenomenon of the Bultmann school and lost momentum as Bultmann’s influence began to wane; however, interest in the historical Jesus had been reignited giving rise to a new wave of unprecedented Jesus research. Historical and sociological concerns rather than theological provide the primary impetus for the ‘third quest’, which, along with the openness to non-canonical sources, distinguishes this quest from that which Käsemann initiated.⁹

There are two characteristic convictions of ‘third questers’: 1) Jesus must be understood within the context of second-temple Judaism, rather than distinct from it, as assumed in the ‘new quest’;¹⁰ and 2) Jesus’ primary concern was the proclamation of the kingdom of God.¹¹ Having said this, the ‘third quest’ is far from homogenous. Reflecting back on the past thirty years, Holmén and Porter observe: “There is an

⁸ Tradition-critics normally employ the criteria of dissimilarity, multiple attestation, embarrassment, and coherence to identify authentic Jesus tradition. For a recent critique of these criteria see Dale C. Allison Jr., ‘Traditional Criteria of Authenticity’, in *HSHJ* Vol. 1, 3-30.

⁹ This is not to suggest that current Jesus research is uninterested in the theological import of their work or that theological concerns do not influence the general approach and methodology of researchers. We will return to this point below.

¹⁰ Cf. Wright, *JVG*, 79, 91-121.

¹¹ Cf. Charlesworth, ‘Historical Jesus’, 127.

abundance of Jesus studies today that displays an almost overwhelming diversity of methods, approaches, hypotheses, assumptions, and results.”¹² Such diversity of thought is evident, for example, in how ‘third questers’ view the relationship between the Jesus tradition and the Synoptic tradition, and there is no consensus in view.¹³ One trajectory to emerge, within which Wright and Dunn might be located, explores alternatives to the tradition-critical approach for verifying Jesus tradition in the Synoptic Gospels.

Wright’s primary assumption concerning the relationship between the Jesus tradition and the Synoptic tradition is diametrically opposed to that of Bultmann. For Bultmann there is absolutely no relationship; for Wright the relationship is absolute. Perhaps this is an overstatement, but we recall Wright’s apologetic: either the Gospels accurately portray “the actual events of Jesus’ life and his kingdom-proclamation,” or “the Gospels got it wrong and Christianity is indeed ill founded.”¹⁴ Wright vindicates this position by providing a reading of the Synoptic Gospels that reveals a portrait of Jesus who is both similar and dissimilar to early first-century Judaism and to the *kerygma* of the early church, as expressed in Acts and the New Testament letters. Although, when pressed, Wright concedes to the arguments for Markan priority, and thus that there is a literary relationship between the Synoptic writings,¹⁵ he nevertheless believes source-critical approaches, which seek to identify

¹² Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter, ‘Introduction: The Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus in Perspective’, in *HSHJ* Vol. 1, xv-xxi (xv).

¹³ The relationship between the Jesus tradition and the Synoptic tradition is one of twenty-seven critical issues within contemporary Jesus Research. Cf. James H. Charlesworth, *The Historical Jesus: An Essential Guide* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2008), xvii-xviii.

¹⁴ N.T. Wright, ‘In Grateful Dialogue: A Response’, in Carey C. Newman, (ed.), *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright’s ‘Jesus and the Victory of God’* (Downers Grove: IVP; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), 244-77 (251).

¹⁵ Cf. Stein who argues, “[A]lthough one does not want to minimize the influence of a common oral tradition upon the writers of the Gospels, it would appear that the similarities we encounter require the

earlier and thus supposedly more authentic strands of tradition, to be misguided in that they fail to take into consideration the influence of the contemporaneous oral tradition.¹⁶ In short: the Synoptic Gospels are the result of a complex literary *and* oral traditioning process. For Wright, this process is better depicted in terms of Kenneth Bailey's work on oral traditions.¹⁷ However, Crossan is correct in challenging Wright's methodology in arguing: "You have not earned nor even argued for your own presuppositions on gospel relations. You have simply derided the general consensus."¹⁸ This omission on Wright's part is the special interest of Dunn's methodology.

Along with Wright, Dunn looks to the Synoptic tradition as the primary source for the Jesus tradition; other sources are brought in secondarily to this source. Dunn too is skeptical of attempts to identify strata within that tradition in order to uncover the historical core. In particular, the ambiguity over the nature, content and structure of Q¹⁹ does not encourage any optimism for Dunn that this method will succeed.²⁰ However, Dunn is noticeably more open than is Wright to work within the general hypothesis of Markan priority and for convenience to speak of Q. In practice, Wright plays down the distinctive features of the individual Gospel accounts whereas

existence of some sort of a literary relationship" (Robert H. Stein, 'Synoptic Problem', in *DJG*, 784-92 (785)).

¹⁶ See the exchange between Crossan and Wright in J. Dominic Crossan, 'What Victory? What God?', *SJT* 50.3 (1997): 345-58 and N.T. Wright, 'Doing Justice to Jesus: A Response to J.D. Crossan: 'What Victory? What God?''', *SJT* 50.3 (1997): 359-79.

¹⁷ Wright, *JVG*, 131-37. Cf. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant/Though Peasant Eyes* (Grand Rapids; MI: Eerdmans, 1983); *idem*, 'Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels', *AJT* 5.1 (1991): 34-54.

¹⁸ Crossan, 'What Victory?', 349.

¹⁹ Dunn prefers to make distinction between 'q' = shared material between Matthew and Luke and 'Q' = the common source/s from which both drew in addition to Mark, noting that it is not at all clear whether q = Q. Cf. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 148ff., 328.

²⁰ Dunn concludes his discussion on Q and on the possibility of a Q community or communities thus: "Overall, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the leap from Matthew's and Luke's common material ('q') to 'Q', to a 'Q community' with markedly different stages in its development, and thence to a wisdom-teaching/non-apocalyptic Jesus is too much lacking in visible means of support" (Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 158).

Dunn attends to these closely with a view to identifying the traditioning process in the Gospels and to observing the trajectories at play.²¹ Wright quickly dismisses variations within the Synoptic tradition through recourse to the oral tradition behind, but how this oral tradition develops Wright does not explore. The oral traditioning process is central to Dunn's thesis and thus receives greater treatment.

Importantly, Dunn's goal might be considered to be more modest than that of Wright's. Wright is optimistic that by approaching the person of Jesus in a pincer movement from second-temple Judaism, on the one hand, and the early Church, on the other, that the resulting picture has an excellent chance of being on "solid historical ground."²² The language is problematic and leaves Wright open to the charge of positivism, despite his care to distance himself from it while developing his methodology.²³ The issue is only compounded by the inadequate attention he gives to the Synoptic interrelationships and his related practice of reading them as a single source. In contrast, Dunn does not believe the data allow the historian to get back to the 'historical' Jesus himself. The very best we can hope for is knowledge of Jesus *as remembered*. The Synoptic Gospels witness to the impact of the life, teaching and deeds of Jesus, who was responsible for the tradition that developed among those who were close to him. We note at this point the close affinity of Dunn's perspective with Assmann's concept of 'mnemohistory'.²⁴ From this viewpoint, the Synoptic

²¹ Cf. Johnson's critique of Wright: "What Wright does *not* do... is consider the difficult critical issues concerning the literary relationships between the sources, nor does he assess the difficulties their respective forms of the 'story' present for historical reconstruction" (Luke Timothy Johnson, 'A Historiographical Response to Wright's Jesus', in Newman, *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*, 206-24 (216); emphasis original).

²² Wright, *JVG*, 131.

²³ Note Johnson's criticism for example: "Wright seems intent on maintaining the character of the Gospels as accurate historical records basically unaffected by literary shaping" (Johnson, 'Historiographical Response', 217).

²⁴ Cf. Alan Kirk, 'Memory Theory and Jesus Research', in *HSHJ* Vol. 1, 809-42. Kirk explores the benefits of memory theory for Jesus research and draws upon the work of Assmann among others.

tradition represents the early church's memory of Jesus, which has its origin in the person of Jesus himself.

Dunn argues that the traditioning process started early – from the moment of initial impact – as the things Jesus said and did were told and retold by his companions. He explains:

Where my emphasis differs from that of other questers at this point is (1) my claim that we can get back to the earliest impact made by Jesus, made by the events and teachings preserved in the Jesus tradition. This is because (2) the impact translated itself into community tradition from the first; the tradition not only bears witness to the impact made by Jesus but is *itself part of the effect Jesus had on those he called to discipleship*. And (3) the oral character of the traditioning (transmission) process means that in and through the performative variations of the tradition still evident in the Synoptic tradition we are still able to hear the stories first told about Jesus... This will not prevent our recognition that in the retelling/performance of the tradition it was regularly given a fresh slant, that in the different versions we can see how the tradition was taken in different directions and often elaborated.²⁵

Dunn would have us picture the origin and development of the Jesus tradition as follows. In his teaching and deeds Jesus made an indelible impact on those who were around him, particularly upon those who became his followers. From the outset this company of people, united through their common association with Jesus, reported and shared among themselves and with others the things they had seen and heard Jesus perform. Those who were eyewitnesses, and later those who heard second-hand, passed on informally this emerging tradition. Each oral retelling or performance of the tradition would select and shape the tradition in a manner appropriate to the setting, thus providing some diversity within the transmission process. We may compare this traditioning process with Vanhoozer's concept of 'improvisation'. Improvisation does not seek exact replication, but a faithful

²⁵ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 329; emphasis original.

rendition – the goal, we repeat from earlier, is *ipse* identity, which speaks of personal sameness or self-constancy, rather than the numerical exactness implied by *idem* identity.²⁶ Moreover, this diversity was not unregulated. Together with Wright, Dunn finds the work of Kenneth Bailey²⁷ informative:

Bailey puts forward the idea of ‘*informal controlled tradition*’, to distinguish it from the models used by both Bultmann (‘informal, uncontrolled tradition’)²⁸ and Gerhardsson (‘formal controlled tradition’).²⁹ In informal controlled tradition the story can be retold in the setting of a gathering of the village by any member of the village present, but usually the elders, and the community itself exercises the ‘control’.³⁰

Thus with regard to the Jesus tradition, it was the Jesus community itself that controlled the tradition, and particularly the disciples, who Jesus specifically selected to be his primary agents.

Dunn draws attention to the identification of the early followers as Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) and Christians (Acts 11:26), where their relationship with Jesus of Nazareth,

²⁶ Cf. §3.3 ‘Story and Literary Studies’.

²⁷ See Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 205-10.

²⁸ For Bailey, Bultmann’s view is *uncontrolled* in that he assumes the community to be unconcerned with “either preserving or controlling the tradition; ... the tradition is always open to new community creations that are rapidly attributed to the community’s founder. It is *informal* in the sense that there is no identifiable teacher nor student and no structure within which material is passed from one person to another” (Kenneth E. Bailey, ‘Informal Controlled Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels’, *Them* 20 (1995): 4-11 (5); emphasis original). The article is a reprint of that published in the *AJT* 5 (1991): 34-54.

²⁹ Gerhardsson’s thesis rests upon the practice of the Rabbinic schools, and assumes that Jesus’ disciples, like the pupils of the rabbis, memorised and took written notes of Jesus’ teaching for later recital. For Bailey, Gerhardsson’s view “is *formal* in the sense that there is a clearly identified teacher, a clearly identified student, and a clearly identified block of traditional material that is being passed on from one to the other. It is *controlled* in the sense that the material is memorized (and/or written), identified as ‘tradition’ and thus preserved intact” (Bailey, ‘Informal Controlled’, 5; emphasis original).

³⁰ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 206; emphasis original. So too Kirk: “[C]ultivation of tradition is an enterprise of communities, not isolated individuals. Tradition is enacted with a group knowledgeable of and existentially identified with it; its performance is a shared ritual rehearsal of the cultural memory” (Kirk, ‘Memory Theory’, 823). For an alternative view that emphasises the individual in the traditioning process see Samuel Byrskog, ‘A New Perspective on the Jesus Tradition: Reflections on James D.G. Dunn’s *Jesus Remembered*’, *JSNT* 26 (2004): 459-71.

whom they called Christ, functioned as the community's chief criterion of demarcation. Drawing from the social sciences, Dunn avers:

Sociology and social anthropology teach us that such groups would almost certainly have required a foundation story (or stories) to explain, to themselves as well as to others, why they had formed distinct social groupings, why they were designated as 'Nazarenes' and 'Christians'.³¹

For Dunn, the foundation stories for the fledgling church were none other than those concerning Jesus. During those early years the apostles' teaching was paramount, becoming foundational for the new messianic community, preserving and passing on the Jesus tradition (Acts 2:42).³² The apostles were those who sat under Jesus' teaching and who walked with him from the beginning – from John's baptism until his ascension (Acts 1:22-3). Here we should observe the accumulative testimony in the Synoptic tradition to the teacher-disciple role between Jesus and his closest companions.³³ Jesus is frequently referred to as teaching, and his followers as his disciples, with the implication that "the disciples understood themselves to be committed to remember their teacher's teaching."³⁴ It's also fitting to recall Jesus' injunction to 'hear' and to 'do' in this regard.³⁵ Jesus' teaching was to be lived out in appropriate fashion. For the disciples it was not merely a task of rote memorisation of the things Jesus said or did, but the appropriation of a radically new lifestyle, which served to reinforce their recollection.

³¹ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 175.

³² Cf. Eph. 2:20; Gal. 2:9.

³³ E.g., Mark 14:14//Matt. 26:18//Luke 22:11. We should note that the disciples infrequently address Jesus as 'teacher', and these mainly in Mark's account (Mark 4:38; 9:38; 10:35; 13:1//Luke 21:7). The address more often appears on the lips of others. Most common is the reference to his followers as 'disciples' and to Jesus' 'teaching' ministry.

³⁴ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 177. Not only did his disciples receive instruction but they were also commissioned to teach others. Cf. Matt. 28:19; see also the mission of the twelve (Matt. 10:5ff.//Luke 9:1ff.) and the seventy (Luke 10:1ff.).

³⁵ Matt. 7:24ff.//Luke 6:46ff.

Dunn envisions numerous performances of the Jesus tradition on many and diverse occasions, none identical in every way yet the core of the tradition being faithfully preserved. What Dunn finds of critical importance from Bailey's insights is the appreciation that each oral performance 'starts afresh' in its rendering of the tradition for a new context. Dunn explains:

In oral tradition one telling of a story is in no sense an editing of a previous telling; rather, each telling starts with the same subject and theme, but the retellings are different; each telling is a performance of the tradition itself, not of the first, or third, or twenty-third 'edition' of the tradition.³⁶

The point is that each performance has its own integrity; each retelling provides an interpretation of the tradition in its own right. This observation for Dunn makes the literary paradigm, whereby one edition is superseded by the next, thoroughly inappropriate for the analysis of the Jesus tradition.³⁷ Rather, Dunn argues that the Synoptic Gospels preserve specific oral performances of the Jesus tradition behind which further investigation is futile.

If the Synoptic accounts depict a dynamic oral traditioning process, which Dunn believes they do, then the student of these writings cannot hope to identify the development of the tradition apart from what is evident within these writings themselves. However, the 'informal yet controlled' process by which the oral tradition developed suggests to Dunn that the Jesus tradition now available to us in

³⁶ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 209.

³⁷ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 223. Kirk agrees: "What memory analysis does... is negate descriptions of oral history of the gospel traditions as a diachronic transmission through multiple stages..." Accordingly it "destroy[s] Bultmann's grand evolutionary tradition-history inferences, for it shows that memory strategies, enacted in various genres, are an inherent property of the tradition." Indeed, "[c]ognitive operations of memory, such as economy of presentation, compounding, temporarily indeterminate framing, and schematizing in a typology of forms correspond to the characteristic features of the synoptic gospels" (Kirk, 'Memory Theory', 826, 833, 839).

the Synoptic writings is a faithful interpretation of the memory of those first impacted by Jesus. Dunn succinctly summarizes his thesis this way:

(1) The only realistic objective for any ‘quest of the historical Jesus’ is Jesus remembered. (2) The Jesus tradition of the Gospels confirms that there was a concern within earliest Christianity to remember Jesus. (3) The Jesus tradition shows us *how* Jesus was remembered; its character strongly suggests again and again a tradition given its essential shape by regular use and reuse in oral mode. (4) This suggests in turn that that essential shape was given by the original and immediate impact made by Jesus as that was first put into words by and among those involved or eyewitnesses of what Jesus said and did. In that key sense, the Jesus tradition *is* Jesus remembered. And the Jesus thus remembered *is* Jesus, or as close as we will ever be able to reach back to him.³⁸

A Way Forward

Our approach applies the insight that Dunn draws from Bailey concerning oral traditions to the Gospel traditions. Our working hypothesis is that the emergence of written performances in the second half of the first century did not create an *immediate* shift from the ‘informal yet controlled’ traditioning process of the earlier ‘oral only’ period. Luke’s prologue, for example, suggests that oral and literary performances existed side by side during the second half of the first century.³⁹ While we may assume that the introduction of written performances implies a certain ‘fixedness’ entering into the tradition, it would be a mistake to consider that the Jesus tradition itself became fixed. Initially, the resulting fixedness pertained only to that *particular* performance, not to the Jesus tradition itself. That the emergence of literary performances did not immediately delimit the tradition is evident in the production of what we now know as the four canonical Gospels, not to mention the

³⁸ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 335; emphasis original.

³⁹ See also N. H. Taylor, ‘The Destruction of Jerusalem and the Transmission of the Synoptic Eschatological Discourse’, *HTS* 59.2 (2003): 283-311 (287).

number of non-canonical writings still extant.⁴⁰ The ‘many’ that Luke refers to in his prologue did not inhibit his own performance; indeed it may have encouraged it. However, with the passing of the first generation, including those who were apostles and/or eyewitnesses, and the existence of written performances, it is only natural that specific representatives of these texts would gain support as authoritative interpretations of the Jesus tradition.⁴¹ In this act, the Jesus tradition in its official versions was delimited to that of the Synoptic Gospels and John. In short, for the church that emerged as a result of the impact made by Jesus, the Jesus tradition eventually equated to the Gospel traditions.

In our view, it is a mistake to assume that Mark’s supposed chronological priority afforded it greater importance within the Jesus tradition any more than an earlier oral performance had precedence over a later one. The existence of Matthew, Luke and John, for that matter, argues against any distinct preference for Mark’s performance. As a consequence, while granting the legitimacy of the Markan priority hypothesis, we insist that Matthew and Luke should be viewed as offering legitimate performances of the Jesus tradition in their own right, and not just as redactors of Mark. Source and redaction criticism may offer some insight in reading Matthew and Luke, but in the end they only offer what Vanhoozer calls a ‘thin’ description of

⁴⁰ Cf. Wilhelm Schneemelcher (ed.), *New Testament Apocrypha* Vol. 1, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co.; Louisville: WJK, rev. ed., 1991).

⁴¹ The transition from oral to written performances of a tradition occurs in response to what Assmann terms a *Traditionsbruch*, which refers to “a serious breakdown of the communicative frameworks enabling transmission of tradition.” Kirk explains: “Assmann argues that the limitations of communicative memory force themselves upon an emergent community as a *crisis of memory* at approximately the forty-year threshold, that is, when it is apparent that the cohort of its living carriers – the generation that experienced the charismatic period of origins – is disappearing. It is at this point that the community, if it is not eventually to dissolve along with its memory, must accelerate the transformation of communicative memory into the enduring artifacts of cultural memory” (Kirk, ‘Memory Theory’, 840, 841; emphasis original).

these writings.⁴² If Mark's performance was not initially given special status, then both Matthew and Luke could draw freely from Mark as one among several sources (probably oral as well as written) in the production of their own improvisation of the tradition. The end result is that we have three separate, although naturally related, performances of the Jesus tradition. What cannot be denied is that the early church saw the contribution of each of the Synoptic writings to the Jesus tradition to be sufficiently important to warrant the preservation of all three.⁴³ From the perspective of the early Church, each of the three had a contribution to make to the memory of Jesus and none could be put aside without resulting in a diminished view of Jesus.

We recall Vanhoozer's contention that potential textual meaning may only find realisation at the generic level, when one attends to the text as a whole.⁴⁴ Moreover, we draw attention to Vanhoozer's postfoundationalist theology which emphasises the irreducible nature of each genre and asserts that each genre mediates a unique and irreplaceable perspective on reality.⁴⁵ When we apply Vanhoozer's thought to the study of the Synoptic Gospels, we may postulate that certain aspects of our knowledge of Jesus will only emerge by attending to the Synoptic accounts in their narrative form. If this is so, then a narrative-critical reading of these writings appears unavoidable.⁴⁶ While a narrative-focussed reading ought not to be the only approach

⁴² Cf. §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'.

⁴³ It is probable given Luke's comment in his prologue that other written performances were deemed either redundant or inadequate and so were not preserved, making the conservation of the three Synoptic accounts even more significant.

⁴⁴ Cf. §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'.

⁴⁵ Cf. §3.2 'Story and Theological Studies'.

⁴⁶ For narrative-critical approaches to the Gospels see: Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (London: SCM, 1999); Stephen D. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge* (New Haven, CT: YUP, 1989); Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990); James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005); David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (eds.), *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (London: T&T Clark, 1999).

to these documents, no critically informed historical or theological enquiry should overlook it.

Narrative criticism offers the appropriate balance to redaction-critical readings.

Redaction critics have made valuable inroads in highlighting the distinctive features of each of the Synoptic Gospels as we have received them on the basis of insights from form and particularly source criticism. To denounce this entire pursuit as fruitless and misguided, as does for example N.T. Wright, is clearly unwarranted.⁴⁷

What is advocated here is a chastened redaction-critical approach that operates in the service of narrative criticism.⁴⁸ By shifting the task from the arena of historical-critical analysis to draw upon literary-critical approaches, a narrative world emerges that tends to unify rather than atomise the character of Jesus in these sources. One may explore the insights gained from a close comparative analysis that redaction criticism encourages, but the goal is not to search out the ‘historical core’ of a particular Gospel, but to observe the particular emphases and interests of the narrative.⁴⁹ Each Gospel *as a whole* testifies to Jesus, rather than selected sayings or events.⁵⁰ Thus, while one might assume Markan priority, greater significance is not attributed to the Markan account over that of Matthew and/or Luke. Furthermore, we wish to avoid the ‘intentional fallacy’ often accompanying redaction-critical

⁴⁷ See, for example, Wright, *JVG*, 86-89 and the critique of Crossan above.

⁴⁸ It will become apparent in our discussion below that narrative criticism and redaction criticism as we employ them are more nuanced than that assumed in Moore’s critical reflection on the relationship between the two disciplines over two decades ago (cf. Moore, *Literary Criticism*, 56-68). For a recent perspective on the developments within narrative criticism and its relationship with the ‘new’ redaction criticism see Joel B. Green, ‘Narrative and New Testament Interpretation: Reflections on the State of the Art’, *LTQ* 39.3 (2004): 153-166 (161-63).

⁴⁹ Thus, while we share with Wenham an interest in the eschatological discourse in the Synoptic traditions, our task is quite unlike that which he set for himself over twenty years ago – to reconstruct the pre-synoptic tradition. Cf. David Wenham, *The Rediscovery of Jesus’ Eschatological Discourse* (Gospel Perspectives Vol. 4; Sheffield: JSOT, 1984).

⁵⁰ So also Green: The “staging of events in their narrative sequence is the primary control on the determination of meaning. ... [I]t will not do to treat each ‘event’ or pericope’ in isolation” (Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 11).

approaches where assumptions are often made as to the writer's intent in omitting, modifying, maintaining or elaborating on a particular tradition. Rather, following Vanhoozer's lead, our attention will focus on what the author has done, that is, we will attend to the 'what' and 'how' of the discourse rather than to speculate as to 'why'.⁵¹

With this said, we do agree with Dunn that the existence of three Synoptic accounts affords the reader an opportunity to view the traditioning process of the Jesus story in practice. We have extended Dunn's thesis concerning the 'informal yet controlled' oral traditioning process to include the early stages of the transition to literary performances. If we assume that the community controls regulating the oral tradition were functioning in the same manner in the early church's endorsement of Matthew and Luke, along with Mark, then Matthew and Luke serve, in this ad hoc fashion, as Mark's *sanctioned* interpreters, that is, they provide evidence of how Mark was interpreted in the early church. Clearly the Christian community's regulation of the Jesus tradition was sufficiently generous to allow for the diversity evident within the Synoptic tradition.

Importantly, we affirm that all knowledge of the 'historical' Jesus necessarily involves interpretation. The 'Jesus' encountered through the Gospel accounts is Jesus 'as remembered' by the early Christian community and testified to through the medium of artistic literary works. Put bluntly, the 'Jesus' of the Gospels is a literary character: the Gospels offer individual literary portraits of Jesus.⁵² These portraits are constrained by both the historical subject, who initiated the traditioning process,

⁵¹ Cf. §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'.

⁵² Cf. Richard A. Burridge, *Four Gospels, One Jesus?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994).

and the community, whose memory they present.⁵³ Properly understood, the Gospels are the primary documents of the early church's 'mnemohistory'.⁵⁴ As with Dunn, our enquiry is somewhat less optimistic than Wright's, yet insists with Vanhoozer that we may still gain 'adequate' knowledge of the 'historical' Jesus, even if this is not 'certain' knowledge.⁵⁵ Thus we proceed by taking the Gospels seriously as the early church's testimony to the person of Jesus, acknowledging with Provan that our access to the past is inescapably dependent upon the testimony of others. We recall that for Provan:

Testimony, story-telling if you like, is central to our quest to know the past; and therefore interpretation is unavoidable as well. All testimony about the past is also interpretation of the past. It has its ideology or theology; it has its presuppositions and its points of view; it has its narrative structure; and (if at all interesting to read) it has its narrative art, its rhetoric.⁵⁶

We approach each Gospel, therefore, on its own merits with the view to exploring the *unique and irreducible* portrait of Jesus in each. The resulting montage created by the four⁵⁷ canonical Gospels offers parameters to understanding the person of Jesus who generated the tradition in the first place. For the thesis to hold, at least at one level, we agree with Wright that this montage ought to demonstrate both similarity and dissimilarity with both late second-temple Judaism and the early church.⁵⁸

⁵³ V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation 5; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 63-68. Cf. §3.1 'Story and Historical Studies'.

⁵⁴ Here applying Assmann's concept to the study of the Gospels. Cf. §3.1 'Story and Historical Studies'.

⁵⁵ Cf. §3.2 'Story and Theological Studies'.

⁵⁶ Iain W. Provan, 'In the Stable with the Dwarves: Testimony, Interpretation, Faith, and the History of Israel', in V. Philips Long et al. (eds.), *Windows into Old Testament History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 161-197 (168). Cf. §3.1 'Story and Historical Studies'.

⁵⁷ Might this approach enable John's Gospel be brought in from the cold and allowed to contribute to historical Jesus research?

⁵⁸ In Powell's assessment: "The proposal of this double criterion may well be Wright's most enduring contribution to the methodological enterprise" (Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1998), 165).

As the quotation from Provan above reminds us, no testimony is value free; every testimony involves interpretation, and every interpretation has its ideology or theology.⁵⁹ With respect to the Synoptic Gospels, we agree with Wright that their respective theologies are significantly indebted to Israel's story. This story informs and shapes the stories they tell about Jesus, who was eventually understood to be God's anointed kingdom agent – the Davidic Messiah – through whom Israel's restoration and the creational purposes for humanity would be realised. The exegetical chapters to follow demonstrate that the traditioning process Fishbane has observed in the Old Testament literature continued in the Synoptic writings.⁶⁰ Thus, *peshet*, *midrash*, allegory, typology, and paraphrase were effectively employed in the service of situating Jesus within Israel's story.⁶¹ Through creative improvisation of their sacred writings, a practice which according to the memory of the disciples was initiated by Jesus himself, Israel's story was retold with Jesus as its climax and his followers therefore as the restored people of God – 'true Israel'.⁶²

We affirm, therefore, Vanhoozer's view that it is insufficient merely to address the historical and literary contexts and neglect the canonical context. A suitably 'thick description' of a text must seek to situate the passage within the entire biblical drama and note its contribution to the drama's overall plot.⁶³ To this end our exegesis explores the influence of Israel's story in providing shape, content and the

⁵⁹ Cf. §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'.

⁶⁰ Cf. §4 'The Making of Israel's Story'.

⁶¹ Cf. Craig A. Evans, 'The Old Testament in the New', in Scott McKnight and Grant Osborne (eds.), *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2004), 130-145.

⁶² E.g., Luke 24:44-47; Acts 2:14-42; 3:11-26; 4:8-12.

⁶³ Cf. §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'. See also Green, who insists that "from a narratological perspective it is important that we inquire into the sort of narrative context presented by the NT writers themselves" as "narratives do not come to us as free-floating entities, but themselves derive from a cultural context and discourse situation, from which 'thickness' they draw much of their force" (Green, 'Narrative', 162, 163).

interpretative grid for retelling the Jesus tradition. However, while the story of Israel guides our reading of the Synoptic Gospels, we aim to avoid what appears at times in Wright's analysis to be the imposition of that story upon the text.⁶⁴ Precedence must first be given to the internal coherence of the respective Synoptic narrative; after all, the *immediate* literary context of a pericope is the particular Synoptic account in which it is situated, not Israel's story.

Moreover, as recent research is becoming increasingly aware, the theology of the researcher significantly influences every aspect of academic enquiry.⁶⁵ For example, we have seen above how the dialectic theology of Bultmann and the conservative theology of Wright have influenced their respective assumptions concerning the relationship between the Synoptic tradition and the Jesus tradition. While theological interest may not be the primary impetus for current Jesus research, no enquiry is unaffected by it. Indeed, Holmén argues that theological interest is more significant than often acknowledged. He comments: "I would contend that theological interest is actually the source from which the pursuit of studying Jesus substantially originates today."⁶⁶ In view of this, Kloppenborg exhorts:

[R]ather than declaring the most recent Quest to be free of theological (or theoretical) interests and thereby falsely implying a purely antiquarian 'objective' interest in the figure of Jesus, it would be preferable to ask the scholar to make clear, along with her approach to sources, criteria and procedures, the broader discursive field within which her Jesus scholarship is situated.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Cf. Klyne R. Snodgrass, 'Reading and Overreading the Parables in *Jesus and the Victory of God*', in Newman, *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*, 61-76.

⁶⁵ Cf. §3.3 'Story and Literary Studies'.

⁶⁶ Tom Holmén, 'A Theologically Disinterested Quest? On the Origins of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus', *ST* 55 (2001): 175-97 (188).

⁶⁷ John S. Kloppenborg, 'Sources, Methods and Discursive Locations', in *HSHJ* Vol. 1, 241-90 (249).

Our own concern is not Jesus research per se, but rather an exploration of the hermeneutic of ‘story’ as it pertains to reading the Synoptic Gospels with special reference to Mark 13, Matthew 24-25, and Luke 21. As such, it explores the intertexture between the Synoptic Gospels and Israel’s scriptures, but it does so under the rubric of Israel’s story, which we have clarified in Part A of this thesis to be a theological-historical construct. It is most appropriate, therefore, to assume that this line of enquiry will not only contribute to our understanding of the relationship between the literature of the Old Testament and New Testament, but that it will also impinge upon contemporary theological and historical enquiries. Thus, while our enquiry is largely a literary concern it would be naïve to consider it uninterested in or irrelevant for either Jesus Research or Christology.⁶⁸ Rather, in view of the discussion above, it must be viewed as one indispensable avenue for critical enquiry in both of these fields.

In the three exegetical chapters to follow we explore the individual performances of Mark, Matthew, and Luke respectively, addressing three common lines of enquiry in each. Our working hypothesis is that the writers of the Synoptic Gospels performed the Jesus tradition from the perspective of one who inhabited the narrative world inculcated by Israel’s scriptures, and, moreover, that the theological-historical construct we have termed the ‘story of Israel’ also sufficiently identifies *their* frame of reference. Our first line of enquiry, therefore, is to test this hypothesis by examining the intertextual links in the prologue that serve to situate the performance

⁶⁸ For example, in sharp relief to Bultmann’s dialectic theology, the hermeneutic of ‘story’ draws attention to the *particularity* of the incarnation and insists that if we are to comprehend Jesus, we must understand his significance for Israel. Cf. Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1983), 32: “Jesus Christ, not Israel, constitutes the reality and substance of God’s self-revelation, but Jesus Christ in Israel and not apart from Israel. ... Thus to detach Jesus from Israel or the Incarnation from its deep roots in the covenant partnership of God with Israel would be a fatal mistake.”

within Israel's story. Secondly, since our approach gives priority to the final form and internal coherence of each narrative, care is taken to outline the plot of the performance in order to specify the function of the eschatological discourse in each case. Finally, we provide a detailed analysis of the eschatological discourse, giving attention to its structure and to the interpretation of key terms and expressions, and specifically to the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man'. It is not our intention to engage with all the literature and interpretations associated with these exegetically challenging texts, but rather, through dialoguing with a selection of recently published major commentaries, journal articles and monographs, and by offering our own fresh reading of the discourse, to demonstrate how the hermeneutic of story can function critically to evaluate various contemporary exegetical conclusions.

§7 The Climax of Israel's Story in Mark

Introduction

Our specific concern in this exegetical chapter relates to the nexus between the 'desolating sacrilege' and the 'coming of the son of man' in Mark's eschatological discourse.¹ We recall that this was a particular point of contention between Wright and Allison.² For Wright the 'coming of the son of man' is metaphorical language for the vindication of Jesus as both prophet and Messiah which coincided with the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. The 'desolating sacrilege' and the 'coming of the son of man' thus refer for Wright to two aspects of the one eschatological-historical event. For Allison, on the other hand, the 'coming of the son of man' is literal language for the second-coming of Jesus at the 'end of the age', an event both eschatologically and chronologically distinct from the first Jewish-Roman war, but in Allison's reading of Mark, Jesus mistakenly thought it would occur immediately following this event. To assist our exegetical analysis we employ the hermeneutic of 'story' as developed to this point in our thesis.

We approach Mark's Gospel with the assumption that it represents his own creative improvisation of the Jesus tradition which emerged as a result of Jesus' impact upon his earliest followers.³ It is Mark's testimony to Jesus of Nazareth told from the perspective of Israel's ancient traditions. Two corollaries emerge: Firstly, to hear this testimony we affirm the importance of attending to its generic form and so we

¹ The Gospel of Mark, along with the other NT Gospels, is an anonymous work. In deference to church tradition, we continue the ascription to 'Mark'.

² Cf. §2 'The 'Coming of the Son of Man': Literal or Metaphorical?'

³ Cf. §6 'Story and the Synoptic Traditions'.

refrain from atomising the narrative into independent traditions. Rather, it is assumed that Mark's portrait of Jesus emerges most clearly when his literary work is viewed as a whole. From this standpoint, the eschatological discourse in Mark 13, the primary concern of our exegesis, must be interpreted with consideration to its function within Mark's entire performance. Secondly, it is argued that Israel's story is formative for Mark's presentation. For Mark, the Jesus event is defined by its relationship to Israel's remembered past. Hence, Mark evokes Israel's scriptures so as to situate Jesus within the plot of these writings and to explain the significance of Jesus' teaching and deeds. One of our aims, therefore, will be to explore the intertexture between Mark's performance and Israel's story.

We commence our discussion, however, by briefly situating our present enquiry within the legacy of Wrede's and Schweitzer's contributions to Markan studies. Although dating to the early twentieth century, their writings continue to inform the exegesis of Mark's Gospel, particularly with reference to Jesus research, and so it is beneficial to articulate how the hermeneutic of 'story' relates to their respective positions.

Wrede, Schweitzer and the hermeneutic of 'story'

Contemporary Markan studies remain indebted to Wrede's (1859-1906) perceptive identification of the secrecy motif in Mark's Gospel.⁴ Wrede observed how Mark's Jesus silenced the demons who recognised him (1:25, 34; 3:12), prohibited those who witnessed his mighty deeds from speaking of them (1:43-44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26), taught the crowds in cryptic riddles (4:10-12, 33-34), and adjured his own disciples to secrecy (8:30; 9:9). In short, Mark's Jesus sought to keep his messiahship a secret, at least until after his resurrection.⁵ Wrede concludes:

During his earthly life Jesus' messiahship is absolutely a secret and is supposed to be as such; no one apart from the confidants of Jesus is supposed to learn about it; with the resurrection, however, its disclosure ensues. This is in fact the crucial idea, the underlying point of Mark's entire approach.⁶

In Wrede's historical reconstruction of the Jesus tradition, the secrecy motif arose in the early Christian community as a corollary to the post-resurrection belief that Jesus became the Messiah at his resurrection (cf. Acts 2:26; Rom 1:4; Phil 2:9-11). For Wrede, the early church claimed that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah and taught his disciples accordingly, but he ordered that it be kept a secret until after his resurrection.⁷ However, Wrede found no satisfactory rationale for the secrecy motif had the historical Jesus believed that he was the Messiah, and so surmised "that a historical motive is really absolutely out of the question; or, to put it positively, that

⁴ William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*, trans. J.C.G. Greig (Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1971).

⁵ Wrede, *Secret*, 34ff.

⁶ Wrede, *Secret*, 68.

⁷ Wrede, *Secret*, 68. Cf. J.C.G. Greig, 'Translator's Introduction', in Wrede, *Secret*, vii-xxi (viii); Christopher Tuckett, 'Introduction: The problem of the Messianic Secret', in C. Tuckett, (ed.), *The Messianic Secret* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1983), 1-28, (4-6); Hans Rollmann, 'Wrede, William', in Donald K. McKim (ed.), *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 394-98.

the idea of the messianic secret is a theological idea.”⁸ Thus for Wrede, the tradition evidenced in Mark’s Gospel was the creation of the early church and without any historical basis. The view that Jesus spoke of his messiahship in secret was a theological response to the dilemma facing the primitive Christian community – to explain their claim that Jesus was the Messiah when he made no such claim himself.

Criticism of Wrede’s thesis emerged quickly, with Schweitzer effectively turning Wrede’s argument on its head. Schweitzer (1875-1965) contrasted what he termed Wrede’s “thorough-going skepticism” with his own “thorough-going eschatology.”⁹ Wrede, on the one hand, denied that Jesus understood himself as the Messiah and judged Mark’s narrative to be historically unreliable; Schweitzer, on the other hand, argued for the basic historical reliability of Mark’s account and believed that Jesus knew that he was the Messiah, but understood this in entirely futuristic terms.

Schweitzer proposed:

Like the Kingdom of God, the Messiah belongs to the future and is supernatural. Jesus expects to be changed into the Messiah-Son-of-Man, and to be recognized as such when the Kingdom of God arrives. During the course of his earthly life he is not yet Messiah, and therefore cannot appear as such. The coming exaltation is his secret, and must be kept secret by the disciples when they have become aware of it.¹⁰

Schweitzer developed his portrait of an apocalyptic Jesus with both Matthew and Mark in view. In his reconstruction, Jesus expected eschatological tribulation, which would manifest in response to the proclamation of the kingdom, to be the catalyst for

⁸ Wrede, *Secret*, 67.

⁹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A&C Black, 3rd ed., 1954), 328ff.

¹⁰ Schweitzer, *Quest*, viii.

his future enthronement as Messiah. However, when this did not materialise as envisioned, Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem with the revised understanding that he would suffer on behalf of the faithful in accord with Isaiah's suffering servant and that by "bearing the whole pre-Messianic tribulation alone, he will inevitably usher in the Kingdom."¹¹

Schweitzer saw two options available to the student of Mark's Gospel in view of the secrecy motif. Either one follows the "thorough-going skepticism" of Wrede and excises those elements of the narrative that sit awkwardly with the exegete's reconstructed portrait of Jesus, or one accepts Mark's account as it stands and constructs a portrait of an apocalyptic Jesus that accounts for the "thorough-going eschatology" in the Gospel.¹² In Schweitzer's assessment, "[t]he historical problem confronting the scientific student of the life of Jesus may be said to be solved in its essentials by the knowledge gained from late-Jewish eschatology."¹³

For N.T. Wright, the respective approaches of Wrede and Schweitzer are paradigmatic for all subsequent Jesus research. He suggests scholarship generally moves along one of two main highways:

The *Wredestrasse* insists that we know comparatively little about Jesus, and that the gospels, in outline and in detail, contain a great deal that reflects only the concerns of the early church. The *Schweitzerstrasse* places Jesus within the context of apocalyptic Judaism, and on that basis postulates far more continuity between

¹¹ Schweitzer, *Quest*, ix.

¹² Schweitzer, *Quest*, 335.

¹³ Schweitzer, *Quest*, xi.

Jesus himself, the early church, and the gospels, while allowing of course for importantly different historical settings in each case.¹⁴

For example, Wright identifies on the *Wredestrasse* the ‘Jesus Seminar’, which, in rejecting the Markan portrait of an apocalyptic Jesus, “has declared the Markan narrative a fiction.”¹⁵ Wright believes his own work, however, along with other ‘third questers’ of similar stripe, such as Allison, to be following the route of Schweitzer.¹⁶

So how does the hermeneutic of ‘story’, with its reliance upon narrative-critical approaches, sit within this schema? Because narrative criticism, as traditionally employed, brackets historical concerns, it holds certain similarities to Wrede’s approach. Indeed, Malbon “link[s] the work of Wrede positively with the beginning of an appreciation of literary characteristics of Mark’s Gospel.”¹⁷ Likewise, Rhoads reflects:

Embracing the literary approach to the Markan narrative has involved for me two major shifts in perspective: one a shift from fragmentation to wholeness, the other from history to fiction.¹⁸

Thus, like Wrede, narrative critics approach Mark’s account as a work of fiction; nevertheless, there is an important methodological assumption that distinguishes their respective approaches. Whereas Wrede believed Mark’s narrative to be *unhistorical*, narrative critics are traditionally *ahistorical* in methodology and reserve

¹⁴ Wright, *JVG*, 21. Thus, Wright views the ‘no quest’ period, characterised by the existentialism of Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), as largely following the scepticism of Wrede, as he does also the ‘new quest’ birthed by Ernst Käsemann (1906-1998).

¹⁵ Wright, *JVG*, 81.

¹⁶ Wright, *JVG*, 81-82.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, ‘New Literary Criticism and Jesus Research’, in *HSHJ* Vol. 1, 777-807 (797).

¹⁸ David Rhoads, ‘Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark’, *JAAR* 50 (1982): 411-34 (412).

judgement with respect to the historicity of the Gospel.¹⁹ However, Rhoads is correct to ask: “How do we move from the story-world to the real world, to aid in the historical reconstruction of Mark’s time or of Jesus?”²⁰ We suggest that the hermeneutic of ‘story’ offers a way forward.

Properly understood, Mark’s narrative is a literary performance of ‘Jesus as remembered’; it is Mark’s testimony to the Jesus event which the early Christian community preserved as an authoritative version of the Jesus tradition. In short: narrative approaches to Mark’s Gospel are exploring the literary characteristics of the early church’s mnemohistory and as such are necessarily also historical enquiries, even if literary concerns predominate. Thus, historical questions (and theological for that matter) cannot be legitimately ‘bracketed’ if due respect is given to the nature of the literature under investigation. Indeed, we agree with the conclusion of Merenlahti and Hakola:

In the case of the Gospels, forms of narrative analysis that are more open to questions concerning the ideological and historical background of texts must be considered preferable, because they pay due attention to the nature of the Gospels as non-fictional narratives.²¹

In this sense, narrative criticism, in the service of the hermeneutic of ‘story’, is closer to Schweitzer, although with a chastened view of the historical task: the historical

¹⁹ Thus Rhoads explains: “By using the term ‘fiction,’ I do not mean to deny that Mark used sources rooted in history or that his story does not reflect historical events of Jesus’ day. Rather, by ‘fiction’ I mean to suggest that in the end the narrative world of the story is a literary creation of the author and has an *autonomous integrity*” (Rhoads, ‘Narrative Criticism’, 413; emphasis original).

²⁰ Rhoads, ‘Narrative Criticism’, 426.

²¹ Petri Merenlahti and Raimo Hakola, ‘Reconceiving Narrative Criticism’ in David Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (eds.), *Characterization in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 13-48 (48). See also the discussion in Joel B. Green, ‘Narrative and New Testament Interpretation: Reflections on the State of the Art’, *LTQ* 39.3 (2004): 153-166; *idem*, ‘Narrative Criticism’ in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Methods for Luke* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 74-112, especially 81-92.

events of Jesus' day are presented to the reader "first and foremost [as] a story-world created by the author."²² Narrative approaches are also similar to Schweitzer in that the focus is on the Gospel as a whole, allowing the eschatological features in the narrative to inform the characterisation of Jesus.

Narrative criticism likewise offers a fresh perspective on Mark's secrecy theme. From the standpoint of the narrative critic the secrecy theme functions as a literary technique for articulating Markan Christology. "The motif exemplifies a common device in literature (ancient and modern) whereby the narrator reveals significant information to the reader that is not known to characters within the story."²³ Thus for Malbon, the secrecy motif is employed by the implied author to create a tension between "a reticent Markan Jesus and a bold Markan narrator."²⁴ While the narrator declares Jesus to be the Messiah, God's son, in the prologue (1:1), the Markan Jesus does not explicitly accept the ascriptions until the trial scene (14:61-62), at which point his pending execution is already sealed, both in his own mind (14:36-41, cf. 8:31-32; 9:30-31; 10:32-34, 45; 14:27) and in that of the religio-political leaders (3:6; 11:18; 12:12; 14:1). Thus, for the implied reader, Jesus only accepts the messianic title once his vocation has been defined and set in terms of the suffering 'son of man'. We explore this more fully below in the discussion of Mark's plot.

²² Rhoads, 'Narrative Criticism', 414. For Rhoads "it is a referential fallacy...to think that the statements expressed or implied in the narrative of Mark are a 'direct' representation of the events of Jesus' day" (413).

²³ Mark Allen Powell, 'Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Mark', *Int* 47 (1993): 341-46 (342).

²⁴ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *Mark's Jesus: Characterization as Narrative Christology* (Waco, TX: BUP, 2009), 191.

Mark's performance of the Jesus tradition and the hermeneutic of story

There are three main geographical settings in Mark that provide a framework for his performance and facilitate its plot – the wilderness, Galilee, and Jerusalem.²⁵

Settings provide the essential context for understanding the characters and events in the narrative.²⁶ Of particular interest for our enquiry is the recognition that the

wilderness setting in Mark's prologue is significant within the broader context of

Israel's story. Coupled with the narrator's explicit reference to second-Isaiah's new-exodus motif, the wilderness setting effectively situates the "good news of Jesus

Christ, the Son of God" (1:1) within the context of Israel's remembered past as the fulfilment of YHWH's promises to restore his people.²⁷ To understand Mark's

performance of the Jesus tradition, therefore, it is essential to explore Mark's

intertexture with Israel's sacred traditions. We agree with Rikki Watts that an

investigation into the original literary context of the Old Testament citations "brings new light and coherence to Mark."²⁸ However, we also note Wiarda's concern that

"interpreters sometimes let OT allusions control their reading of an entire scene."²⁹

Hence, while we assume the significance of Jesus for Israel's story to be the chief

²⁵ David Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 3rd ed., 2012), 66-69.

²⁶ Cf. James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 87-88.

²⁷ So also Green: "[By] locating 'the beginning of the gospel' in Isa 40, Mark lays bare his presupposition that the narrative he is about to develop has as its conceptual framework that larger story of Exodus, Exile, and the New Exodus" (Green, 'Narrative Criticism', 83).

²⁸ Rikki E. Watts, 'Mark', in *CNTOT*, 111-249 (111). Watts joins Evans, France, and Marcus as contemporary exegetes with particular interest in the importance of Old Testament citations, allusions and echoes for the interpretation of Mark's Gospel. Cf. Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC, Vol. 34B; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001); R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002); Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (AB; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000); *idem*, *Mark 8-16* (AB; New Haven, CT: Doubleday, 2009); Thorsten Moritz, 'Mark, Book of', in *DTIB*, 480-485; Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, rev. ed. 2000).

²⁹ Timothy Wiarda, 'Story-Sensitive Exegesis and Old Testament Allusions in Mark', *JETS* 49 (2006): 489-504 (497).

concern of Mark's narrative, we give primacy to the Gospel's own narrative integrity. Our investigation of Mark's prologue demonstrates this approach with a view to employing this hermeneutic in reading subsequent passages of interest in the Gospel.

Mark's prologue (1:1-13)

The four references to the wilderness (cf. 1:3, 4, 12, and 13) demarcate Mark 1:1-13 from the commencement of Jesus' public ministry in the new setting of Galilee (1:14ff.).³⁰ The wilderness scene is thus the setting for the first narrative appearances of both John and Jesus. As suggested above, the significance of the wilderness setting extends beyond its distinct geographical description; it is a rich theological metaphor.³¹ In Israel's story, the wilderness is the place of encounter with YHWH; it was the setting for the initiation of the covenant under Moses' leadership as well as the setting for the renewal of the covenant for the exilic community.³² That Mark seeks to evoke the wilderness motif from Israel's story is evident in his explicit reference to Israel's tradition in Mark 1:2-3. The quotation is a composite of Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 with Mark sandwiching the first two passages

³⁰ France, *Mark*, 54-60. France notes the concentration of key terms – 'Spirit' (πνεῦμα, 1:8, 10, 12; elsewhere, 3:29, 12:36; 13:11) and 'wilderness' (ἐρημος, 1:2, 3, 12, 13; elsewhere, 1:35, 45; 6:31, 32, 36) – that appear in 1:1-13 which favour the view that the prologue extends to 1:13. Guelich, on the other hand, is representative of those who extend the introduction or prologue to verse 15, observing an inclusio between εὐαγγέλιον in 1:1 and 1:14-15. Cf. Robert A. Guelich, *Mark 1-8:26* (WBC; Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 1-5. Verses 1:14-15 are clearly transitional and as such relate both to the prologue and Jesus' public ministry that follows (so Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 138), however, our assessment agrees with France that the narrator offers the reader a 'behind the scenes' perspective in 1:1-13 that is unknown to the other main characters in the story, neither the disciples, crowds, nor the religio-political authorities. From 1:14-15, Jesus proclaims the 'good news' of the kingdom publically.

³¹ So too is the Jordan River as the location of John's baptismal ministry. The Jordan is not only a suitable place for baptising the penitent, but also recalls ancient Israel's entry into the promised land under Joshua's leadership. The symbolism was not lost on the first century messianic pretender Theudas, who, as Josephus describes, led his followers to the Jordan believing that the waters would part for him at his command (*Ant.* 20.97).

³² Cf. John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40-55* (ICC, London: T&T Clark, 2005), 20; §4 'The Making of Israel's Story'.

between the reference to Isaiah and the quotation from Isaiah itself.³³ Mark creatively reshapes and employs Israel's scriptures so that the characterisation of both John and Jesus is informed by Israel's story.³⁴

The intertexture with Exodus 23:20a recalls YHWH's promise to Israel in the Sinai wilderness to send his 'messenger' before them to protect them 'on the way' to the land that he had prepared for them.³⁵ Exodus 23:20-33 makes up the epilogue to the Book of the Covenant (Exod 20:22-23:33), which, along with the Decalogue, formed Israel's constitution. Of first priority, YHWH required exclusive worship (cf. Exod 20:2-3) and so Israel was warned not to worship the gods of the people that YHWH would drive out before them (Exod 23:24). Moreover, Israel was called to obey the voice of the messenger who would watch over them on their journey. YHWH's name was said to reside in the messenger (Exod 23:21), thus to disobey the messenger was, by implication, to disobey YHWH himself.³⁶

The exodus motif found new expression in Isaiah, where once again a 'way' was to be prepared through the wilderness, only now it expressed the hope of the

³³ So Watts, 'Mark', 114; *idem*, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 88-90. Mark cites the prophet Isaiah as his primary source, but clarifies the Isaiah reference by means of the other two texts. Sandwiching and framing are rhetorical techniques that are employed frequently in Mark's narrative (e.g., the healing of Jairus' daughter frames the healing of the woman with an issue of blood). Cf. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 54-56; Rhoads et al., *Mark as Story*, 51-52.

³⁴ E.g., Mark's citation agrees with Exodus 23:20a (LXX), "before *your* face" (πρὸ προσώπου σου), rather than Malachi 3:1 (LXX), "before *my* face" (πρὸ προσώπου μου), and in quoting Isaiah substitutes "him" (αὐτοῦ) in the place of "our God" (τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν) (cf. Isa 40:3; LXX) thus making Jesus rather than God the specific referent and the one before whom John is viewed as the eschatological forerunner.

³⁵ As with the term ἄγγελος, מַלְאָךְ may refer to either a human or angelic messenger, although the angel of the LORD is to be assumed (Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus* (OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1974), 487).

³⁶ The biblical text carefully maintains distinction between the messenger and YHWH himself. Following the golden calf episode YHWH initially informs Moses that his messenger will continue to journey with them, but his own presence will not (Exod 33:1-3). Cf. Watts, 'Mark', 116.

descendants of Judah for a return to Jerusalem from Babylonian exile. “The original exodus pattern – deliverance from Egypt, journey through the desert, and arrival in the promised land – is transformed into the hope of a grander new exodus.”³⁷

Second-Isaiah opens with the declaration of comfort for YHWH’s people who have served their term in exile (Isa 40:1-2). Jerusalem/Zion is to herald the ‘good news’ (Isa 52:7) of the return of YHWH, the warrior-shepherd, who will lead the exiles back through the wilderness to their homeland (Isa 40:6-11). In a reapplication of exodus themes, Isaiah 40-55 depicts the ‘return’ after the pattern of the first exodus: YHWH will go before them and be their rear guard (Isa 52:12b; cf. Exod 13:21; 14:19-20). He will prepare a way for them through the waters (Isa 43:1-3; 51:9-10) and the wilderness (Isa 40:3-5; 42:16; 43:19) and will provide for their needs during their journey (Isa 41:17-20; 48:21; 49:9b-10), bringing them safely to a restored Jerusalem where YHWH will rule as king (Isa 44:26; 51:9-11; 52:6-10). However, according to Israel’s story, while the returnees arrived safely back in the land and, despite the initial delay, the temple was rebuilt, YHWH’s glorious return to Zion failed to materialise.³⁸

In Malachi’s day, YHWH’s return to Zion remained a future eschatological hope. The verbal and thematic coincidences between Malachi 3:1, Exodus 23:20 and Isaiah 40:3 suggest that Malachi 3:1 itself may be a deliberate reworking of the other two texts in view of the delay in YHWH’s second-exodus coming. Watts, for example,

³⁷ Watts, ‘Mark’, 114.

³⁸ Cf. §4 ‘The Making of Israel’s Story’. For Watts, Isaiah 40-55 functions as an explanation to why Israel’s return from exile failed to live up to expectations: Due to Israel’s blindness and failure to follow YHWH’s plans or his agent Cyrus (Isa 42:18-20; 48:1, 8) the fulfilment of this glorious hope was deferred until the arrival of a future ‘messianic servant’ (Isa 49:1-6; 52:11-53:12) (Rikki E. Watts, ‘Consolation or Confrontation? Isaiah 40-55 and the Delay of the New Exodus’, *TynB* 41 (1990): 31-59).

observes a number of parallels between Malachi and the post-exilic Isaiah 56-66 where the delay in YHWH's arrival is attributed to the people's improper worship and covenantal unfaithfulness.³⁹ Were YHWH to return suddenly, the result would surely be catastrophic for a rebellious people. Likewise, the clear verbal parallelism between Malachi 3:1 and Exodus 23:20 suggests that the former intentionally evoked the Exodus passage. Indeed, the varied forms of wickedness described in Malachi 3:5 and the corrupt worship practices of the priesthood (Mal 1:6-2:9) imply that the Jews of Malachi's generation were disregarding the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant, and were suffering a blight upon their crops as a consequence (Mal 3:11-12, cf. Exod 23:25). Hence the call to repentance is coupled with a call to remember Moses' teaching that he gave at Horeb (Mal 4:4).⁴⁰ Unlike the Exodus account, however, the messenger in Malachi 3:1-5, who is identified in Malachi 4:5 as the Elijah-prophet, prepares the way for YHWH's own arrival as in Isaiah 40 (Mal 3:1; cf. Isa 40:3).⁴¹

Malachi 3:1 continues to challenge contemporary exegetes, chiefly due to the ambiguity inherent within the text regarding the relationship between 'my messenger', the 'messenger of the covenant' and 'the Lord', with four different

³⁹ For example, both address the issues of right worship (Isa 58; 66:3) and covenantal faithfulness (Isa 59:21; 61:8) and are concerned that the people's sinfulness might result in the judgement at YHWH's arrival (Isa 65:1-7, 11-15). Cf. Watts, 'Mark', 118.

⁴⁰ Malachi 4:4, 5-6; (3:22, 23-24; MT) are considered to be two appendices to the six disputations added perhaps by later redactors. For example, the name 'Horeb' and the call to 'remember' are typical of the Deuteronomic tradition and may be the editorial work from another hand (Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 340-42). However, the terms are not exclusively Deuteronomic and appear also in Exodus and the contemporaneous writings of the Chronicler (e.g., 'remember': Exod 13:3; 17:14; 20:81 Chron 16:12, 15; 'Horeb': Exod 3:1; 17:6; 33:6; 2 Chron 5:10) and so Verhoef is correct to argue that the evidence is inconclusive (Piter A. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 338-39). Regardless, our concern is with the final form of the book.

⁴¹ In the book's final canonical form, "the parallel structure of Mal 3.1 and 23 functions to identify the two figures" (David M. Miller, 'The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3', *NTS* 53 (2007): 1-16 (3)).

combinations touted.⁴² While one can ill afford to be dogmatic with respect to this passage, we find Watts' analysis convincing, who equates the 'messenger' with the 'messenger of the covenant', and 'the Lord' (יהוה) with YHWH, resulting in the following structure for Malachi 3:1-5:

- a. 'my messenger' will be sent to prepare the way for... (3:1a)
- b. 'the Lord' to enter his temple (3:1b)
- a'. the 'messenger of the covenant' purifies the priesthood (3:1c-4)
- b'. YHWH will come and judge wickedness (3:5)⁴³

Read this way, the task of the Elijah-prophet is that of a refiner, commissioned to purify YHWH's wayward people, particularly the corrupt priesthood, in preparation for the arrival of YHWH and the eschatological judgement. Watts explains Malachi's improvisation of the Exodus and Isaiah texts:

Malachi sees the delayed second exodus as an ironic recapitulation of the first. Whereas in the first exodus Yahweh sent his messenger to prepare Israel's way by destroying the idolatrous nations (Exod. 23:22-23), now the messenger prepares Yahweh's way, and it is faithless Israel who, having become like those nations, is under threat (Mal. 4:5-6; cf. 2:3).... The problem for Malachi is not Yahweh's tardiness, but rather Israel's all-too-familiar disobedience. Echoing Exod. 23:20, he warns that Yahweh will send his messenger, "Elijah," to prepare Isa. 40:3's delayed new-exodus way by purifying Israel's priestly leaders and

⁴² Possible relationships:

View	'my messenger'	'messenger of the covenant'	'the Lord'
1)	Elijah	Elijah	Elijah
2)	Elijah	Distinct figure	YHWH
3)	Elijah	Elijah	YHWH
4)	Elijah	YHWH	YHWH

Miller suggests that early Jewish exegetes likewise wrestled with this inherent ambiguity and observes various trajectories in Ben Sira, 4Q521, and the LXX (Miller, 'Messenger', 5).

⁴³ Watts, 'Mark', 117. In Millar's overview of various analyses of the verse, we identify the following arguments in support of Watts' position: 1) That the title 'the Lord' is to be equated with YHWH is evident in that this association is made explicitly in Mal 1:6 where the only other occurrences of יהוה are found in Malachi (4. n. 13); 2) The two references to a 'messenger' in the one verse are identified rather than distinguished, allowing the reference to the messenger in 1c. to be a reiteration of 1a (4. n.15). Further the parallelism between 'the Lord' and 'the messenger of the covenant' need not suggest a single character, but merely a close relationship between the two (4. n. 14); and 3) This allows 'the messenger of the covenant' as the nearest antecedent to function as the subject of 3:2-4, and thus to distinguish the purification wrought through the activity of the messenger (3:2-4) from the subsequent judgement to occur with the arrival of YHWH (3:5). This requires a like distinction between 'the day' of the messenger (3:2) and the day YHWH acts (3:17) (5-6). Page numbers in brackets refer to Miller, 'Messenger'.

reconciling his faithless people to “the fathers.” But they must obey him lest Yahweh, when he comes, smite the land with a curse (Mal. 4:6).⁴⁴

Mark’s quotation of these texts evidences further improvisation of this tradition where they function to illuminate the characterisation of Jesus and John depicted via other means in the prologue. For example, the narrator gives specific attention to John’s attire (“clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt,” 1:6a) and diet (“locusts and wild honey”, 1:6b), which in isolation might merely indicate a person with an ascetic lifestyle, but when accompanied by the citation becomes an unmistakeable allusion to Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8; cf. Zech 13:4).⁴⁵ Likewise, calling the people of God to covenantal loyalty through repentance was the standard charge of a classical prophet (cf. Zech 1:3-4), but the intertexture with Malachi suggests that John’s proclamation of “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (1:4b) has eschatological overtones, particularly so when he testifies of ‘a stronger one’ to follow (1:7), who will baptise with the Holy Spirit (1:8b).⁴⁶

By means of the citation and John’s self-testimony, the narrator identifies John’s role as the one who prepares the way for Jesus. John’s subservient role is reinforced by his disappearance from the narrative once Jesus commences his ministry, except for

⁴⁴ Watts, ‘Mark’, 118.

⁴⁵ So France, *Mark*, 69; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 156-57.

⁴⁶ John coupled the call to repentance with the practice of water baptism, where the immersion in water probably symbolised forgiveness (cf. Ezek 36:25). Bathing was practiced in the Old Testament cultus as a means of ritual purification (e.g., Lev 14:8; 15:13; 16:4), and became an important feature within the Qumran sect to symbolise eschatological renewal and the reception of the Spirit (1QS 3:1-12). Unlike the Qumran practice, which was a regular self-administered practice, John called for a one-time baptism of repentance which he administered. In this respect, John’s baptism reflected proselyte baptism (e.g., *m. Pesah.* 8:8; *b. Yebam.* 46a). This latter association may indicate the dire state of affairs within late second-temple Judaism. Baptism in the Spirit signifies eschatological salvation (cf. Joel 2:28-32). Cf. France, *Mark*, 66; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 152, 154-55.

the flashback of his death (6:14-29), which foreshadows Jesus' own death, and the allusion to John in Jesus' response to the disciples' question regarding the eschatological appearance of Elijah (9:11-13, cf. 6:14-29). Together these features depict John as Malachi's eschatological Elijah-prophet whose message of repentance precedes the eschatological denouement. As YHWH's messenger, John is to call the people to repentance, lest when the 'one to come' arrives, Israel find itself under judgement (cf. Mal 3:5), and the promise of long awaited salvation (Isa 40:3) results instead in a curse (Mal 4:6). Thus, John's location in the wilderness and the intertexture with Isaiah 40:3 encourage the reader to understand John's role as the forerunner to 'the Lord', who is about to return to Zion and establish his rule over the nations, except that in the new Markan context, 'the Lord' before whom John prepares the way is not YHWH, but YHWH's representative – Jesus.

In Mark, YHWH returns to Zion in the person of Jesus Messiah, God's son. In Isaiah and in Malachi the 'one to come' is none other than YHWH, but through his redaction of the tradition, "Mark makes the forthright claim that Israel's new-exodus hopes have been inaugurated in Jesus: he is the one through whom Yahweh's delivering personal presence and kingly reign is manifest (1:15)."⁴⁷ Thus, while neither Exodus 23:20, Malachi 3:1, nor Isaiah 40:3 are messianic in their own contexts, they have been made specifically to be so in Mark's context.⁴⁸ The ascriptions 'Messiah' and 'son of God' (1:1) therefore identify Jesus as God's specially anointed kingdom agent, making the story of Jesus at the same time the

⁴⁷ Watts, 'Mark', 119.

⁴⁸ Cf. Andrew S. Malone, 'Is the Messiah Announced in Malachi 3:1?' *TynB* 57 (2006): 215-228.

story of Israel's God.⁴⁹ The 'good news' (εὐαγγέλιον) that commences with John (1:1)⁵⁰ and which Jesus announces (1:14-15) and inaugurates (14:22-25) is none other than the reign of YHWH forecast by Isaiah (Isa 40:9-10; 52:6-10).⁵¹ Jesus is the unique embodiment of YHWH's presence; he comes in YHWH's stead and with divine affirmation.⁵² In Mark's prologue, the scriptures speak of his coming (1:2-3), the Spirit anoints him at his baptism (1:10) and the voice from heaven endorses his sonship (1:11). The narrator makes no reference to others seeing or hearing the divine manifestation at Jesus' baptism. At this stage in the narrative, those who heard John's preaching know of a 'stronger one' to come, but they do not know that this is Jesus Messiah, God's son.

⁴⁹ Although without the definite article, Χριστός functions as a title as it does elsewhere in the Gospel (8:29; 9:41; 12:35; 13:21; 14:61; 15:32), rather than as proper name. So France, *Mark*, 50; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 141. Marcus attributes the lack of article to the genitive case (cf. 9:41). The title 'God's Son' may not be original, it is absent from important uncials (e.g., \aleph^* and Θ) and from a number of patristic witnesses. Marcus believes that it is easier to explain its addition than its omission and so deems it secondary, although France entertains the idea that its absence in these witnesses may be the consequence of a scribal error (France, *Mark*, 49; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 141). If original, it is possible that Mark uses the title to refer to Jesus' divinity as God's eternal Son (so Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 14-15), but such a reading is not required of the text. For Israel, 'sonship' defined their *function* as YHWH's representatives, they were his priestly kingdom (Exod 4:23; 19:6). As Messiah, Jesus represents Israel in serving as YHWH's primary kingdom agent (2 Sam 7; Ps 2:7).

⁵⁰ Grammatically, καθώς links the opening clause with the composite OT citation and the appearance of John in the wilderness (1:2-4). This grammatical relationship suggests Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ θεοῦ functions primarily as a title for the prologue and derivatively as a title for the entire narrative as a second referent. Cf. France, *Mark*, 50-51; Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 145-46.

⁵¹ Cf. Isa. 40:9; 52:7; 60:6; 61:1, where the verbal form of the term occurs in the LXX. See also *Pss Sol* 11, where Isaiah's imagery is evoked in anticipation of Jewish deliverance from Roman rule. A full discussion occurs in Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, 96-99. For Watts, the Isaianic new-exodus motif provides the substructure for Mark's narrative. "Mark's new-exodus macro-structure presents Jesus delivering Israel from the strong man Beelzebul... leading his blind followers along a way (i.e., of cross-bearing discipleship) that they do not understand... and arriving finally in Jerusalem" (Watts, 'Mark', 119-20). While Watts has admirably demonstrated the presence of the Isaianic new-exodus motif in Mark, it is insufficient to account for Mark's narrative as a whole. For example, it is noticeable that the eschatological discourse, which is absent from Watts' text, *Isaiah's New Exodus*, engages primarily with Daniel. 'Israel's story' offers a more comprehensive paradigm.

⁵² Mark reveals his high christology in audaciously casting Jesus Messiah in YHWH's role. Cf. Malone, 'Messiah', 228. Jesus' special relationship with God is reinforced throughout the narrative but falls short, in our reading, of an explicit claim of divine sonship in an ontological sense.

There can be no mistaking the importance of Israel's story for Mark's performance of the Jesus tradition. Mark's prologue situates the subsequent events in narrative in continuity with Israel's sacred traditions and indeed at the point of eschatological denouement. In short: for Mark, the Jesus event is the climax of Israel's story.

The eschatological discourse: contextual issues and overview.

The aim of the discussion so far has been to demonstrate the exegetical gains the hermeneutic of 'story' offers Mark's reader. Interpreters who approach Mark within the broader context of Israel's story are able to reap the benefits of the Gospel's intertextual links with Israel's scriptures. Our overview of Mark's prologue demonstrates that his performance of the Jesus tradition is inextricably entwined with Israel's remembered past to the point that any reading of Mark that does not explore these interconnections will inevitably be impoverished. Israel's story provides the broad context within which Mark's narrative is situated.

Because Mark's narrative as a whole is the primary context for the eschatological discourse, the task of this present section is to explore the function of the eschatological discourse within the plot of Mark's performance before providing an overview and outline of its structure. In addition, since Mark 13 demonstrates significant intertexture with the book of Daniel, it is imperative that a brief discussion of Daniel's eschatology precede our exegesis of the discourse itself. This is undertaken at the conclusion of this section in preparation for our exegetical analysis.

The eschatological discourse in its narrative context

The plot of Mark's narrative might be best explored with reference to the major conflicts Jesus encounters as the chief protagonist. "Conflict contributes not only to the structure of the plot but also may set the tone, define characters, and determine atmosphere in a narrative."⁵³ In Mark, these conflicts, although diverse, are all related to Jesus' identity and/or his role as YHWH's kingdom agent.⁵⁴ From the prologue, the reader learns that Jesus' primary conflict is with Satan from whom he endures temptation for forty days in the wilderness (1:12-13).⁵⁵ His initial victory over Satan is implied from his subsequent authority over demonic spirits (e.g. 1:23-26) and his saying concerning the binding of the strong man (3:27), although Satan is still indirectly active within the narrative in preventing people from hearing the kingdom message (4:15) and seeking, via Peter, to distract Jesus from his passion (8:31-33). However, the plot largely unfolds in relation to the challenges Jesus faces in teaching his disciples and to his conflict with the Jewish authorities, which emerges early in the narrative during Jesus' ministry in Galilee and surrounding regions and escalates once Jesus enters Jerusalem, the centre of official Judaism.⁵⁶

The catalyst for the change in setting from Galilee to Jerusalem is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah (8:27-29), which accordingly marks the central turning

⁵³ Cf. Rhoads et al, *Mark as Story*, 77-78. The quotation is from the first edition of this text: David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982), 151, n. 1.

⁵⁴ Rhoads et al, *Mark as Story*, 74, 82-96.

⁵⁵ Recalling Israel's forty years in the wilderness (cf. Num 14:33-34; 32:13).

⁵⁶ While the religio-political Jewish authorities consist of a diverse group – scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, Sadducees, elders, chief priests, and the High priest – the implied author characterises them as a collective opposition to Jesus that "think the things not of God, but of humans" and are thus blind to the kingdom of God (There is one exception, the scribe who Jesus declares to be close to the kingdom of God (12:34)). Cf. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 63.

point in Mark's narrative. The disciples, represented by Peter, have finally perceived Jesus' identity to be YHWH's anointed kingdom agent. In Mark's account, Jesus neither confirms⁵⁷ nor rejects⁵⁸ the messianic ascription, but true to his pattern within the narrative warns the disciples against broadcasting news concerning him.⁵⁹ Premature disclosure would be counterproductive: the disciples still have much to learn concerning Jesus' messianic role and what this will entail for them as his followers. The immediate announcement of the first of three passion predictions that take place *en route* from Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem indicates Jesus' concern for his disciples to comprehend the nature of his messianic mission – Jesus understands his messianic vocation to include suffering before vindication and exaltation.⁶⁰ The challenging lesson for the disciples to learn is that suffering messiahship implies suffering discipleship. Thus, Jesus instructs his disciples 'on the way' (ἐν τῇ ὁδῷ)⁶¹ to Jerusalem that the 'way' of discipleship, like that of redemption (cf. 10:45), is the 'way' of the cross.⁶²

Once he enters Jerusalem, Jesus' attitude towards the temple develops into the chief driving force of Mark's plot. Evoking eschatological hope in Zechariah for the advent of the Davidic king (Zech 9:9),⁶³ Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a colt as Israel's champion only to be rejected by his own and handed over to the Romans to

⁵⁷ As he does in Matthew (Matt 16:17-20).

⁵⁸ Pace J. H. Charlesworth, 'From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology: Some Caveats and Perspectives', in Jacob Neusner et al. (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), 225-64 (252).

⁵⁹ So France, *Mark*, 330.

⁶⁰ 8:31-32; 9:30-31; 10:32-34.

⁶¹ 8:27; 9:33, 34; 10:32; 10:52.

⁶² Cf. Larry W. Hurtado, 'Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark – and Beyond', in Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 9-29.

⁶³ The intertexture is explicit in Matt 21:4-5. See also Gen 49:10-11; 1 Kgs 1:38, 44. Cf. Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 778-79.

be crucified. This tension is highlighted through Mark's juxtaposition of the adoring crowd, who openly declare Jesus to be David's long awaited descendant (11:9-10), with the sinister response of the Jewish establishment, who secretly plan his death (11:18).⁶⁴ The praise of the crowd is in part a quotation from Psalm 118, a thanksgiving psalm for victories won by YHWH's valiant hand. The Psalm, celebrates the successful return of the king *en route* to the temple to offer thanksgiving to YHWH. In Mark, the allusion to Zechariah and the quotation from Psalm 118 reaffirm Peter's earlier declaration that Jesus is indeed Israel's Messiah, the promised son of David (Mark 8:29). The crowd's understanding of Jesus' kingdom mission, however, is superficial, and its initial enthusiasm quickly diminishes⁶⁵ once Jesus, for all appearances, is at the mercy of Pilate (15:11).⁶⁶ Mark's reader, on the other hand, recognises that the crowd's prior assessment of Jesus is correct, he is David's promised descendant and as YHWH's agent he has authority over the temple (cf. Mal 3:5).

The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities⁶⁷ comes to a head in the temple scene,⁶⁸ which provides the immediate context for the eschatological discourse. The scene is framed by Jesus' first entry into the temple (11:11) and his prophetic

⁶⁴ The identity of the 'many' that celebrated Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is not easy to specify, but it appears that the large crowd that accompanied Jesus and his disciples from Jericho in 10:46 is envisaged in this scene as well. So Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *In the Company of Jesus: Characters in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2000), 75-76; *pace* Kingsbury, who excludes the "many" (πολλοὶ) in 11:8 from his characterisation of the crowd (Kingsbury, *Conflict*, 23-24).

⁶⁵ Cf. the seed that falls on rocky ground (4:5, 16-17).

⁶⁶ So also Malbon, *Company*, 78.

⁶⁷ Cf. 2:6-7, 16, 24; 3:2, 6, 22; 7:5.

⁶⁸ Markan references to the temple complex (ἱερόν) are concentrated in chapters 11-13 (8 out of 9 references in Mark occur in chapters 11-13 (11:11, 15 [2x], 16, 27; 12:35; 13:1, 3) and the exception in 14:49 is a flashback [although references to the temple sanctuary, ναός, occur in the passion narrative: 14:58; 15:29, 38]). Cf. Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 770; W.R. Telford, *The Barren Temple and the Withered Fig Tree: A Redaction-Critical Analysis of the Cursing of the Fig Tree Pericope in Mark's Gospel and its Relationship to the Cleansing of the Temple Tradition* (JSNTSup. Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 217.

action/denouncement (11:15-17) together with his final departure (13:1) and his prediction of the temple's destruction (13:2). The literary structure allows the reader to perceive that Jesus' earlier prophetic action/denouncement is the basis for his subsequent prediction. Moreover, Mark sandwiches Jesus' action/denouncement in the temple between the accounts of Jesus cursing the fig tree (11:12-14) and the disciples' recognition on the following day that the tree had withered (11:20-25), signalling a relationship between these happenings also.⁶⁹ Assisting the reader's interpretation of these bizarre events is the intertexture in Jesus' denouncement (11:17) with Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11.⁷⁰

It is considered by some that so-called third-Isaiah (chapters 56-66) presents the situation of post-exilic Judah in crisis over the delay in fulfilment of the new exodus expectation.⁷¹ The people had returned to the land, but YHWH's glorious return had not eventuated. The closing section of Isaiah evokes both 'new exodus' and 'new creation' motifs to express YHWH's arrival as a future eschatological hope where not only Israel's salvation will be fully realised but also YHWH's intention for all of creation (cf. Isa 65:17). Isaiah 56 expresses this future hope of salvation in terms of an extension of the covenant to all who love YHWH and keep his covenant. YHWH will gather the foreigner (Isa 56:3, 6) and eunuch (Isa 56:3-4), along with the

⁶⁹ Matthew and Mark conflict in their chronology of these events. For Mark: Day 1= Triumphal entry; Day 2 = Cursing of the fig tree and action in the temple; Day 3 = Fig tree withered. These events are conflated in Matthew: Day 1= Triumphal entry and action in the temple; Day 2 = Cursing of the fig tree and fig tree withered. Luke does not record the account of the fig tree, but does have a parable concerning a fig tree, which Jesus tells during the 'long' journey to Jerusalem (Luke 13:6-9).

⁷⁰ Apart from the conjunction (γάρ) in the latter, Mark 11:17b is an exact quotation from Isaiah 56:7d (LXX), which in turn provides a literal translation of the MT. The reference in Mark 17c to a "robbers' hideout" (σπήλαιον ληστών) is an unmistakable allusion to Jeremiah 7:11 (LXX), where the identical expression occurs; the LXX again providing a literal translation of the MT.

⁷¹ See for example the brief discussion in Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 323, 333.

outcasts of Israel (Isa 56:8), and they too will be able to offer sacrifices on the altar (Isa 56:7a). Importantly, YHWH's house is to become a place of prayer for all nations (Isa 56:7b). Contrasting this future hope is the present blindness of Israel's sentinels, who lack knowledge (Isa 56:10-11a), and its shepherds, who, consumed with self-interest, lack understanding (Isa 56:11b-12).⁷²

The prophet Jeremiah journeyed with the pre-exilic Judahites during the tumultuous late seventh and early sixth centuries in their struggle to come to terms with their impending demise. What Judah failed to understand was that Babylon's rise and Judah's looming defeat was YHWH's judgement upon them for breaking the covenant (Jer 7:9). Distorting their capacity to read the times was their misplaced confidence that YHWH's election of Zion made them to be indestructible (Jer 7:4). Yet, far from being the focal point of their covenant relationship with YHWH, the temple had become a robbers' hideout, a supposed safe haven for those bent on doing wrong (Jer 7:11).⁷³ In confronting their error, Jeremiah drew upon Israel's sacred traditions to present the judgement that befell Eli and his sons at Shiloh (Jer 7:12-14, cf. 1Sam 2:18-7:2) and the judgement and exile that befell Ephraim (Jer 7:15, cf. 2 Kgs 17) as evidence that Judah likewise would not be immune to judgement. Sadly, deaf and blind (Jer 5:20-21), Judah failed to see its transgression and failed to hear YHWH's warnings. Instead of being a fruitful vine or fig tree, Judah was barren, even her leaves were withered (Jer 8:13). When Jerusalem eventually fell to

⁷² Watts, 'Mark', 209-10.

⁷³ See the discussion in Larry Perkins, 'The Markan Narrative's Use of the Old Greek Text of Jeremiah to Explain Israel's Obduracy', *TynB* 60.2 (2009): 217-38 (225-27); Robert S. Snow, 'Let the Reader Understand: Mark's Use of Jeremiah in Mark 13:14', *BBR* 21.4 (2011): 467-77 (469).

Nebuchadnezzar's forces in 586 BCE, the temple, Judah's misplaced hope for protection, was the object of Babylonian pillaging and destruction (cf. 2 Kgs 25).

In Mark's performance, Jesus enters into Jerusalem as David's descendant, Israel's rightful representative, and YHWH's agent, through whom YHWH will bring about Israel's long-awaited restoration. The crowds, at this point in the narrative, act as a foil for the religious leaders; they voice the narrator's perspective and affirm Jesus' identity.⁷⁴ We recall that Malachi had rebuked the religious leadership of his day and warned that YHWH's visitation would result in judgement unless they heed the messenger who would precede him. For Mark, John the Baptist is that messenger, and the religious establishment of his day, rather than heed, reject both John (cf. 11:31-32) and Jesus whom he precedes. In the temple scene Jesus embodies YHWH's return to the temple, and his action in the temple and in cursing the fig tree articulates YHWH's rejection of the religious establishment.⁷⁵ With all its activity, the temple was not performing its intended function, that is, to be a house of prayer for all nations. Like the fig tree with ample foliage but no figs, the temple has all the appearance of fruitfulness but no substance.⁷⁶

Mark's Jesus thus draws upon Israel's tradition both to explicate and to substantiate his behaviour. Jesus enacts judgement on the temple and, by inference, upon those responsible for priestly service. As in Jeremiah's day, judgement is coming and the

⁷⁴ For the function of a 'foil' see Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 124-25.

⁷⁵ Cf. Perkins, 'Israel's Obduracy', 225-27; Snow, 'Let the Reader Understand' 470-71.

⁷⁶ Mark's editorial aside noting that it was not the season for figs alerts the reader to the symbolic nature of Jesus' act. Cf. Bryan: "Jesus' cursing of the fig tree for its failure to have figs out of season makes sense against the expectation of perpetual fruitfulness in the eschaton; the fig tree, like the Temple, is condemned for failing to manifest the conditions of the eschaton" (Steven M Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgement and Restoration* (SNTSMS 117; Cambridge: CUP, 2002), 242).

temple will once again be destroyed and Israel's religious leaders deposed. This latter point is made explicit in 'The parable of the Wicked Tenants', with which Jesus confronts the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, when they challenge his authority (Mark 12:1-12). Like the wicked tenants who refuse to return to the landowner the rightful share of the produce and persistently reject the landowner's envoys, ultimately to the point of killing the landowner's son, so too Israel's leadership in rejecting John and particularly Jesus have forfeited their role within YHWH's economy.

Jesus' self-understanding is revealed in his concluding pronouncement⁷⁷ when he quotes from Psalm 118 with reference to his own vocation. Mark's Jesus believed himself to be the Davidic king who, though rejected by the nation's so-called architects, would be vindicated by YHWH, the master builder. Moreover, in rejecting YHWH's agent, Israel's leaders find themselves rejected by YHWH, which would be graphically illustrated through the destruction of the temple. Jesus, the 'stone' that Israel's religious leaders reject, rejects the temple prophesying that not one stone will be left upon another (13:2).⁷⁸ In short, Jesus articulates the temple's discontinued role within the divine economy, which henceforth is to be established upon Jesus, the new cornerstone.⁷⁹ Hence, as the embodiment of YHWH, Jesus' final departure from the temple evokes Ezekiel's vision of YHWH's glory vacating the first temple prior to its destruction by the Babylonians (Ezek 10-11).

⁷⁷ Mark 12:10-11; cf. Ps 118:22-23.

⁷⁸ Watts, 'Mark', 223.

⁷⁹ It is thus evident that for Mark's Jesus the functions of the temple will from hence forth be assumed by himself and his messianic community as the symbolic 'new temple'. Cf. John Paul Heil, 'The Narrative Strategy and Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark', *CBQ* 59.1 (1997): 76-100; Clinton Wahlen, 'The Temple in Mark and Contested Authority', *BI* 15 (2007): 248-67.

There is, therefore, a larger story at play of which the Jewish leadership demonstrate no understanding; however, typical of Mark's performance, these things are explained to those on the inside, his close disciples.⁸⁰ Jesus' teaching on the Mount of Olives is no 'aside' within the narrative⁸¹ but a critical component to the development of Mark's overall plot. The eschatological discourse serves equal importance with the former extended teaching segment on the parables of the kingdom in orientating the disciples and Mark's readership to what it is that Israel's God is doing in and through Jesus the Messiah. The eschatological discourse in Mark 13 thus offers an important 'horizon shift' on the matters transpiring within the narrative.

The eschatological discourse in overview

The designation 'little apocalypse'⁸² misrepresents the prophetic passage as Evans rightly concludes: "The discourse is eschatological, in that it deals with 'last things,' and it has affinities with Jewish apocalyptic, but it is not an apocalypse."⁸³ Rather, its kinship with apocalyptic literature owes much to the clear allusions to the themes

⁸⁰ Cf. Mark 4:11.

⁸¹ Pace Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 864.

⁸² T. Colani originated the 'little apocalypse' hypothesis in the mid-nineteenth century. For a brief overview of its influence in Markan exegesis see G.R. Beasley-Murray, 'The Rise and Fall of the Little Apocalypse Theory', *ExpT* 64 (1953): 346-49; *idem*, *Jesus and the Last Days: The Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

⁸³ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 289. The standard definition for an apocalypse is that published in *Semeia* 14, reproduced here by Collins: An apocalypse is "a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world" (John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2nd ed., 1998), 5).

and symbolism in Daniel that Jesus employs in response to the disciples' question.⁸⁴

In short, the passage is a prophetic discourse engaging eschatological themes.

The aim of Jesus' teaching is to prevent the potential misreading of the signs on the part of the disciples. This is plainly the rhetorical effect of the exhortations: "Beware that no one leads you astray" (13:5); and, "Be alert; I have already told you everything" (13:23). Evidently, Jesus' disciples could misinterpret the destruction of the temple and the events surrounding it and hence Jesus' caution for the disciples to be alert lest they be 'led astray' (13:5, 22). The language is covenantal (cf. Deut 13:6), and warns against disloyalty to YHWH. The false prophet was a particular concern of the Deuteronomist (cf. Deut 18:20ff.), and likewise for Jesus as he anticipates the emergence of false prophets and messianic pretenders during the events surrounding the destruction of the temple. In his response to the disciples' question, Jesus situates the destruction of the temple within an eschatological timetable culminating in the 'end of the age' and the 'coming of the son of man'.⁸⁵

The disciples' two part question seeks clarity as to the timing of the temple's destruction and its accompanying sign (13:4). In his response, Jesus does not answer the disciples' question directly, rather he first sketches a brief eschatological timetable (13:5-8) that distinguishes between 'birth pangs' (13:8) and 'the end' (13:7). 'Birth pangs' lead up to 'the end' but are not to be confused with 'the end' itself, and consist of human and natural disasters including such things as wars, earthquakes and famines. These troubled times provide a fertile ground for

⁸⁴ See discussion below.

⁸⁵ In Mark, it is Jesus who introduces notions of the 'end of the age' into the discussion (cf. 13:7, 13). Compare Matt. 24:3 where this is pre-empted in the disciples' two-part question.

messianic pretenders to rise up and lead many people astray. Jesus expressly warns his disciples to not be deceived by them, but rather to focus upon their own mission. For the disciples, the period marked by ‘birth pangs’ will involve persecution from a variety of sources in response to their testimony to Jesus, which, despite opposition, must continue to all nations until ‘the end’ (13:9-13).

With the general eschatological timetable sketched, Jesus returns to the disciples’ question and addresses the issue of the temple’s demise as a *specific example* of the ‘birth pangs’ identified earlier (13:14-23). Evoking the imagery from Daniel and the Maccabean crisis to depict the temple’s desolation (13:14), Jesus strongly discourages any prophetic hope or messianic expectation in association with the event, but rather warns his disciples to flee from the region. It is quite probable that the disciples entertained an eschatological horizon similar to that depicted in Daniel and believed that the destruction of the temple and ‘the end’ would be closely related events. Yet it appears that this is precisely the perspective Jesus seeks to correct. Like the ‘birth pangs’, of which this event is a significant representative, the temple’s desolation *does not* indicate that ‘the end’ has arrived, although it will precede it. Rather, it will be *after* the suffering specifically related to the destruction of the temple (13:24), but in those days (13:24) representative of ‘birth pangs’, that will be the ‘coming of the son of man’ (13:24-27), the vindication of Jesus in his messianic mission, and the salvation of the elect.

The lesson from the fig tree (13:28-31) illustrates the eschatological timetable just sketched. Mark’s Jesus stakes his reputation upon the eschatological springtime –

the destruction of the temple – arriving within the disciples’ generation (13:30-31).

When this occurs, the disciples are to know that the eschatological summer – the ‘coming of the son of man’ – is close at hand (13:29). But as to the timing of the latter (13:32) only the Father knows, thus the need for watchfulness on the part of the disciples (13:32-37).

The structure of Mark 13 may be outlined as follows:

- A. Jesus predicts the temple’s destruction: Despite its grandeur, the temple is spiritually corrupt and deserving judgement (13:1-2)
- B. The disciples’ question regarding the timing of the temple’s destruction and the accompanying sign (13:3-4)
- C. Jesus’ response to his disciples (13:5-37)
 1. Part 1: The eschatological timetable in general
 - a. The caution against deception from messianic imposters and the sketch of a general eschatological timetable that distinguishes between ‘birth pangs’ and ‘the end’ (13:5-8)
 - b. Jesus calls his disciples to faithful witness in the face of persecution until ‘the end’ (13:9-13)
 2. Part 2: The eschatological timetable with specific reference to the destruction of the temple and the vindication of the ‘son of man’
 - a. The ‘desolating sacrilege’ (destruction of the temple) presented as a specific example of ‘birth pangs’ where messianic expectation is forbidden (13:14-23)
 - b. The vindication of the ‘son of man’ at the *eschaton* and the salvation of the elect (13:24-27)
 3. An illustration from the fig tree to assist in understanding the eschatological seasons (13:28-31)
 4. Concluding exhortation: Be watchful (13:32-37)

The above structural analysis suggests a movement from the general to the specific in the eschatological discourse, with the ‘desolating sacrilege’ passage (13:14-23) depicting a specific example of the ‘birth pangs’ introduced in Mark 13:5-8, and ‘the end’ being further defined by the ‘coming of the son of man’ and the gathering of the elect. Although drawing heavily upon Daniel’s symbolism, the resulting schema demotes the role of temple within Israel’s eschatological timetable where its

desolation no longer functions as the catalyst for the in-breaking of God's kingdom as it does in Daniel. In Daniel, the desolation of the temple *incurs* divine retribution; in Mark, the desolation of the temple *is* divine retribution. Mark 13 provides a reworking of Daniel's eschatological perspective; Israel's future hope rests not with the destiny of the temple but with the destiny of Jesus, the 'son of man'. Jesus answers the disciples' question but in doing so re-centres their focus on himself as the climax of Israel's story.

Mark 13 and the eschatological perspective in Daniel.

In the first major discourse in Mark's gospel (4:1-32), Jesus challenged the disciples to reconceptualise the nature of the kingdom of God and the nature of its manifestation upon the earth. His parabolical teaching visualised the arrival of the kingdom as resembling a small mustard seed, somewhat insignificant initially, but growing over time (cf. 4:30-32), and the impact of the kingdom on the populace as somewhat mixed, not unlike the productivity of seed sown on various soils (cf. 4:1-20). The picture evoked diverges from the triumphal arrival of the kingdom portrayed in Daniel, to which the eschatological discourse in Mark demonstrates significant engagement. Daniel's influence upon literature during the early period of Roman rule is evidenced in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the pseudepigrapha, and the New Testament,⁸⁶ and its eschatological perspective is typical of the apocalyptic worldview shaping Jewish expectation during the late second temple period.⁸⁷ The intertextual links between Daniel and Mark 13 necessitate a brief overview of the

⁸⁶ E.g., 1QM: 1; 4QFlor 2:3; *1 En.* 45-57; *4 Ezra* 11-12; *2 Bar.* 39-40; Mark 13:14, 26 and par.; Rev. 13.

⁸⁷ See Wright, *NTPG*, 280-338.

eschatological perspective in the former before embarking upon our analysis of Mark 13.

Daniel's eschatological perspective and the climax of Israel's story⁸⁸

While the royal courts of the Babylonian and Persian empires during the sixth century provide the narrative setting for the escapades of Daniel and his friends (Dan 1-6), Daniel's visions (Dan 7-12) imagine the period of Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes, ruler of the Greek Seleucid kingdom, and his tyrannical reign over the Jews during the second quarter of the second century BCE. In asserting his authority over the region, Antiochus outlawed regular sacrifices (1 Macc 1:45) and torah observance (1 Macc 1:57), under the penalty of death, and in 167 BCE dedicated the Jerusalem temple to Zeus Olympus (2 Macc 6:2), erecting an altar to the Greek deity and offering swine as a sacrifice – an abomination referred to in Jewish literature of the period as the 'desolating sacrilege'.⁸⁹

Daniel 7 introduces Antiochus – the 'little horn' (7:8) – as an arrogant king who rises from the fourth kingdom in Daniel's vision and who violently oppresses the saints for a three and a half year period (7:25) until the Ancient One intervenes and judges in favour of the saints (7:13-14, 26) and gives all dominion to them (7:17, 27). Greater precision is given concerning the timing of these events in Daniel's subsequent visions. For example, in the vision of the ram and the goat (Daniel 8), the fourth kingdom is explained to be one of the Greek kingdoms to emerge

⁸⁸ Cf. Brant Pitre, *Jesus, the Tribulation, and the End of the Exile: Restoration Eschatology and the Origin of the Atonement* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 51-62.

⁸⁹ Dan 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:54; cf. 2 Macc 6:5; *Ant.* 12.253.

following the break-up of the newly formed Greek empire (8:21ff.). Moreover, Daniel learns that the reign of the bold and deceitful ‘horn’ that arises from this kingdom will be broken, but “not by human hands” (8:25).

In Daniel 9, Jeremiah’s seventy-year exile is extended and re-applied in terms of a seventy-week eschatological timetable.⁹⁰ In other words, in Daniel, the ‘return from exile’, including the restoration and vindication of the Jewish people and the establishment of God’s reign on earth, is reinterpreted as an eschatological event that will mark for all time the end of pagan kingdoms and the oppression of God’s people. The new timetable plots four significant events: 1) the renewal of the high priesthood⁹¹ and the rebuilding of Jerusalem after a seven week period (9:25); 2) the murder of the high priest after a further sixty-two week period (9:26);⁹² 3) the desecration of the temple mid-way through the final week that will mark a period of intense persecution for a further half a week (9:27a);⁹³ and 4) the close of the seventieth week where the desolator himself is brought to an end (9:27b). Thus, in Daniel’s eschatological schema the ‘abomination of desolation’, which involves the

⁹⁰ Cf. Jer 25:11-12; 29:10; §4 ‘The Making of Israel’s Story’. Daniel’s seventy weeks (understood here as seventy weeks of years, i.e., 490 years, or ten Jubilees (cf. Lev 25:1-55)) reinterprets Jeremiah’s prophecy to conclude at the time of Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes. This reading sees the seventy weeks as a symbolic number (as opposed to a strict chronological timetable) that functions to link Jeremiah’s promise of a return from exile with the events unfolding in the second century. Daniel’s reinterpretation appears to be a conflation of the concept of the sabbath year, the year of Jubilee (seven sabbath years), and the literary practice of periodisation characteristic of historical apocalypses. Cf. John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 352-53; John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC, Vol. 30; Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 257-58.

⁹¹ The ‘anointed prince’ is most likely a reference to Joshua, the first post-exilic high-priest (cf. Hag 1:12; 2:2; Zec 3:1ff.; Ezra 3:1ff., here, Jeshua). So, for example, Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel* (AOTC; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001).

⁹² The cutting-off of the ‘anointed one’ is taken here to refer to the murder of the high priest Onias III in 171 BCE, who opposed the attempts of the Jewish Hellenising party to reform Jerusalem into a Greek city (cf. 2 Macc 4:34-38). Cf. Gowan, *Daniel*, 135; *pace* Pitre, *Jesus*, 56-57.

⁹³ I.e., a three and a half year period, cf. Dan 7:25; 12:11.

defilement of the temple, introduces a period of great tribulation that will conclude with the downfall of the oppressor.

In the vision in Daniel 10-11 particular attention is given to the period of oppression, during which time the 'king of the north'⁹⁴ is able to act as he pleases in his defiance of God and his massacre of God's people (11: 35-39). Divine intervention is not immediate; those loyal to the covenant must persevere, even unto death (11:32-35). However, the Most High has appointed the king's demise; after a decreed period of three and a half years the king will be no more.⁹⁵ At the end, Michael, the great angelic prince will arise and deliver those whose names are written in the book (12:1). Even the dead shall rise, the righteous to everlasting life, the wicked to everlasting condemnation (12:2).

Hence, in Daniel's eschatological timetable, the rise of the 'little horn' over the saints and the prohibition of regular sacrifices and setting-up of the 'abomination of desolation' leads directly into a three and a half year period of unprecedented persecution which will conclude with the demise of the 'little horn', the deliverance of the saints, some also from the grave, and the inauguration of God's kingdom. The nexus between the 'abomination of desolation', with its accompanying persecution, and 'the end', when God establishes his kingdom and vindicates his people, is clearly drawn. In Daniel's eschatological perspective, the desolation of the temple signals the imminent arrival of God's kingdom; the climax of Israel's story hinges upon the fate of the temple.

⁹⁴ The reference to the 'king of the north', in addition to the vision of the ram and the goat, makes the identification of the Seleucid kingdom as Daniel's fourth kingdom unmistakable.

⁹⁵ Cf. Dan 12:7, 11.

The eschatological discourse: Analysis (13:1-37)

The unmistakable verbal and thematic links to Daniel dictate that the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 is to be read with Daniel very much in view, but not to the exclusion of the themes developed thus far in the temple scene. Our thesis argues that in Mark's performance, Jesus reapplies the language of Daniel to the events that he predicts will transpire in his disciples' lifetime, but in the reapplication, significant differences from Daniel's eschatology emerge. Having already announced and dramatised the approaching judgement to come upon the temple, akin to the judgement that befell the first temple during Jeremiah's day, Mark's Jesus now recasts Israel's story so that its climax centres not on the fate of the temple, but upon the vocation of the 'son of man', an expression Jesus adopts as his preferred self-reference.⁹⁶ Indeed, Daniel's eschatological framework is reframed in Mark's narrative in part through the juxtaposition of the motifs in Jeremiah with those in Daniel, encouraged, no doubt, by the existing intertexture between Jeremiah and Daniel. This allows for the abominations and resulting desolation of the temple in Jeremiah's day (cf. Jer 7:30, 34 LXX) to transform the significance of the Danielic 'desolating sacrilege' motif when reapplied by Mark's Jesus to the fate of the second temple.⁹⁷

Our analysis commences with a brief overview of Synoptic Gospel parallels which assist in reading Mark's performance with Matthew and Luke's performances in

⁹⁶ See discussion on the 'son of man' below.

⁹⁷ See discussion on the 'desolating sacrilege' below. For allusions to Jeremiah in Mark 13 see Perkins, 'Israel's Obduracy', 232-38; Snow, 'Let the Reader Understand', 476-77.

view. Our analysis of Mark 13 itself, gives primary attention to the ‘desolating sacrilege’, ‘cosmic signs’, and ‘coming of the son of man’ imagery as employed in the eschatological discourse. Our ultimate point of concern is the relationship between the ‘desolating sacrilege’ and the ‘coming of the son of man’.

The eschatological discourse in Mark and the Synoptic traditions: An overview

Appendix One offers an overview of the parallels between Mark, Matthew and Luke with priority given to Mark’s order and content. We reserve discussion of significant distinctive Markan features at the micro level to the analysis itself, but note here that at the macro level the content and order of the eschatological discourse in Mark’s performance is replicated in the performances of the other two Synoptic Gospels with the exception that Matthew’s parallel to Mark 13:9-13 (on persecutions awaiting the disciples) appears in his mission discourse (Matt 10), and the reference to false Christs (Mark 13:21) has its parallel in Luke in Jesus’ teaching on the day of the ‘son of man’ (Luke 17). Finally, the structure and content of Mark’s conclusion is largely distinct.

Jesus predicts the temple’s destruction: Despite its grandeur, the temple is spiritually corrupt and deserving judgement (13:1-2)

An unidentified disciple’s admiration of the temple complex prompts Jesus’ declaration that the temple will be destroyed. The observation of ‘wonderful stones and wonderful buildings’ (ποταποὶ λίθοι καὶ ποταπαὶ οἰκοδομαί) testifies to the impact Herod’s refurbishment of the temple was having on the general populace.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Cf. Josephus, *War* 5.184-226.

However, though an architectural wonder in the making, Jesus predicts that these great buildings will be torn down, not one stone will be left upon another.

The disciples' question regarding the timing of the temple's destruction and the accompanying sign (13:3-4)

When alone with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, the inner circle of disciples ask Jesus in private as to when this will occur and sign that will precede it.

Matt 24:3b	Mark 13:4	Luke 21:7b
<p>πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος;</p>	<p>πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα;</p>	<p>πότε οὖν ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα γίνεσθαι;</p>

Matthew is unique at this point in his performance including reference to Jesus' 'parousia' and the 'end of the age' within the disciple's question. We take this up in our discussion of Matthew in the following chapter. Mark (like Luke) centres the disciples' question upon the timing of the temple's destruction and what sign will accompany it.

Jesus' response: The caution against deception from messianic imposters and the sketch of a general eschatological timetable that distinguishes between 'birth pangs' and 'the end' (13:5-8)

Interestingly, Jesus begins his reply with a warning against deception (βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ, 13:5),⁹⁹ for many will arise claiming to be God's anointed kingdom agents. These will come 'in my name' (ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου, 13:6), says Jesus, and

⁹⁹ Geddert identifies βλέπω as one of Mark's 'watchwords' and argues that Mark employs the term throughout the Gospel to connote a 'call for discernment'. See Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSup 26; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 84-87.

claim, “I am he!” (ἐγώ εἰμι, 13:6). Matthew supplies the further description of the role the impostors presume, “I am the Christ” (Matt 24:5); Luke supplies the impostors’ message, “The time is at hand” (Luke 21:8). Jesus is not predicting some form of identity fraud, where his personal identity will be stolen by others, but that many will arise who will falsely present themselves as God’s representative, his agent for bringing about the kingdom, and will dupe large numbers of people. In a demonstration of his pastoral concern for his fledgling community, Jesus sternly cautions against his disciples having anything to do with them. Evidently the events surrounding the temple’s destruction will be an occasion for such impostors to arise and Jesus seeks to avoid any confusion on the disciples’ part. The distinction Jesus goes on to draw between ‘birth pangs’ (ὠδίνων) and ‘the end’ (τὸ τέλος) provides an eschatological timetable by which the disciples will be able to situate the events about to transpire. ‘Birth pangs’, Jesus explains, consist of human and natural disasters including such things as wars, earthquakes and famines that anticipate ‘the end’ but are not to be confused with ‘the end’ itself.

What is ‘the end’ that is in view? France has recently suggested that the reference to ‘the end’ (τὸ τέλος) in 24:7 has the destruction of the temple as its referent: “The disciples have asked when the catastrophic event predicted by Jesus will be accomplished (συντελέω), and he replies by speaking first of when that completion (τέλος) is *not* to take place.”¹⁰⁰ While this is possible, it is more likely, given the eschatological nature of the impostors’ claim, that what is in view is the ‘end of the

¹⁰⁰ France, *Mark*, 509.

age' accompanied by the establishment of the kingdom of God.¹⁰¹ From the perspective of Daniel's eschatology, the destruction, or at least desecration, of the temple and the establishment of the Kingdom of God are closely related events, however, in distinguishing the 'birth pangs' from 'the end' itself, Jesus provides a framework for re-envisioning the temple's role in the eschatological timetable.

Jesus' response: Jesus calls his disciples to faithful witness in the face of persecution until 'the end' (13:9-13)

The further exhortation to "watch out for themselves" (Βλέπετε δὲ ὑμεῖς ἑαυτοὺς, 13:9) signals the transition to instruction concerning the vocation and fate of the disciples during the period marked by 'birth pangs' (13:9-13). For the disciples, opposition and intense persecution will arise in response to their testimony to Jesus. Earlier, Jesus had taught his disciples that being his follower would necessitate suffering and persecution in the same way that he would endure suffering (cf. 8:34-38; 10:38-40). Now, this is explained in more detail as being delivered over to local city councils, being beaten in the synagogues, and standing before governors and kings as part of their testimony to Jesus (13:9). As with Jesus, the disciples will experience opposition even within their own families (13:12, cf. 3:20-21, 31-35).¹⁰² But in the face of opposition, the disciples are to be encouraged in the knowledge that they will receive divine assistance through the Holy Spirit who will guide their

¹⁰¹ So Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 306-7, who defines 'τὸ τέλος' as "the end of the human era," "the goal toward which history is moving", which will be brought about by "the appearance of the 'son of man' and the full establishment of the kingdom of God."

¹⁰² For Old Testament echoes and allusions and developments within the extra-biblical literature see Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 887-88.

speech (13:11). Jesus directs them to maintain faithful witness to all nations (13:10) until ‘the end’¹⁰³ with the promise of salvation for those who so endure (13:13).

Jesus’ response: The ‘desolating sacrilege’ (destruction of the temple) presented as a specific example of ‘birth pangs’ where messianic expectation is forbidden (13:14-23)

With the general eschatological timetable sketched and the nature and focus of the disciples’ mission clearly defined, Jesus returns to address the disciples’ question specifically (13:14-23).

Matt 24:15-16	Mark 13:14	Luke 21:20-21a
Ὅταν οὖν ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ρηθὲν διὰ Δανιήλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,	Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,	Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ, τότε γινώτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς.
τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,	τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,	τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη

While a fuller treatment of Matthew’s and Luke’s performance is taken up in their respective chapters below, we note at this juncture Matthew’s specific reference to Daniel as the source of the ‘abomination of desolation’ imagery, and the likewise specific reference to the ‘holy place’ as that which is defiled. Luke, on the other hand, utilises non-apocalyptic language to describe Jerusalem under siege and about to be desolated. Mark gives no indication of the source of the imagery and the clause ‘standing where it ought not’ (ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ) is likewise vague. The

¹⁰³ εἰς τέλος without the article is most likely functioning adverbially, i.e., ‘forever’, rather than a specific reference to the eschatological ‘end’ as in 13:7. So France, *Mark*, 519. Likewise, Evans suggests, “... the point has to do with enduring and not quitting or abandoning the faith” (Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 313). Even so, a double sense may be implied, “referring both to death and to the end of the world...” (Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 888).

parenthetical exhortation, ‘let the reader understand’ (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοείτω), which also occurs in Matthew’s account, is most likely the narrator’s interjection signalling that special consideration is required to comprehend Jesus’ words.¹⁰⁴

The ‘desolating sacrilege’

The enigmatic expression ‘the desolating sacrilege’ or ‘the abomination of desolation’ (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) evokes Daniel and the atrocities committed by Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes during 167-164 BCE.¹⁰⁵ In the Septuagint, the term βδέλυγμα (frequently translating תועבה and שקץ) identifies that which is an abomination before YHWH, and can refer to unclean animals or insects banned from Israelite consumption (Lev 11:10ff.), unnatural sexual practices (Lev 18:22ff.), false measures (Deut 25:15f.), blemished offerings to YHWH (Deut 17:1), and particularly the worship of Israel’s pagan neighbours, their idols (Deut 7:25f.), their practices (Deut 12:31), and those who so engage in such activities (Deut 18:12). Thus, it is an abomination for an Israelite to be involved in pagan worship or to encourage fellow Israelites to do so (Deut 13:13ff.). Therefore, when succumbing to the abominations of its neighbours, Judah itself became an object of YHWH’s judgement and was ejected from the land (Jer 2:7, 7:10, 30; Ezek 7:5ff.).

¹⁰⁴ Collins suggests it may be an editorial note to the person responsible for the public reading of the Gospel to explain the significance of the ‘abomination of desolation’ imagery where necessary. Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 608. Alternatively, Perkins argues that it might be more appropriate to understand the expression as belonging to the discourse of the Markan Jesus: “Jesus is directing any among his current disciples and those beyond this circle who read the Daniel materials related to the ‘abomination that causes desolation’ to read them in the light of his interpretation and thus to read them with understanding” (Larry Perkins, “‘Let the Reader Understand’: A Contextual Interpretation of Mark 13:14”, *BBR* 16.1 (2006): 95-104 (104).

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Dan 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:54.

Although not fully explained within Daniel itself, the expression τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως is linked to the actions of the arrogant ‘little horn’ that result in the defilement of the temple.¹⁰⁶ Whether the ‘abomination of desolation’ refers to an idol, the pagan altar, or the pagan sacrifice cannot be said with certainty; all three are prime candidates.¹⁰⁷ The result of the ‘abomination of desolation’ is the desecration of the temple and war upon those who refuse to submit to the king’s decrees. Jews loyal to the covenant labelled the king’s atrocity τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως as a derogatory pun on the deity’s title, ‘Lord of heaven’.¹⁰⁸

In Mark, the ‘desolating sacrilege’ is seen “standing where it ought not” (ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ). The presence of the masculine participle (ἐστηκότα) modifying a neuter noun (τὸ βδέλυγμα) suggests either a person or a pagan deity may be implied.¹⁰⁹ Scholars have expended much effort identifying a suitable referent for the ‘desolating sacrilege’ in the events surrounding the first Jewish-Roman war, which resulted in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple.¹¹⁰ Suggestions include:¹¹¹ Titus, who investigated the holy of holies when the temple was already in flames;¹¹² the standards carried by the Roman legions and to which sacrifices were made in the courts of the burning temple;¹¹³ or, the Zealots’ occupation of the temple under John of Gischala in 68 CE. The directive to ‘flee to the mountains’ would appear redundant under the first two options, for the war was already over by that time. For

¹⁰⁶ It is evident that all four parallels have the same referent in view.

¹⁰⁷ Watts, ‘Mark’, 223.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Michael A. Grisanti, ‘ܚܕܝܬܐ (šāqas)’, in *NIDOTTE* Vol. 4, 243-46.

¹⁰⁹ France, *Mark*, 525

¹¹⁰ E.g., William A., Such, *The Abomination of Desolation in the Gospel of Mark: Its Historical Reference in Mark 13:14 and its Impact in the Gospel* (Lanham, MD: UPA, 1999), 81-115.

¹¹¹ Cf. France, *Mark*, 525; Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 890-91.

¹¹² Josephus, *War* 6.220.

¹¹³ Josephus, *War* 6.316, cf. Pilate’s earlier attempt to bring the Roman standards into Jerusalem, *Ant.* 18.55-59.

Josephus, the activities of Zealots were abominations that defiled the temple,¹¹⁴ and this last option would also allow sufficient time for flight. However, Watts may be closer to the mark in suggesting that “an overly precise definition is misguided.”¹¹⁵ “Mark 13, although clearly referring to a historical event, does so using prophetic topoi. As with all such prophetic language, the concern is the significance of the event, not an exact description.”¹¹⁶ Jesus’ earlier action in the temple makes sufficiently clear the view that the temple’s ministry was corrupt and awaiting divine judgement even prior to the temple’s further desecration by the Zealots.¹¹⁷

What then were the disciples to see (‘Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε...)? The ‘desolating sacrilege’ imagery evokes both the desecration of the temple and the war with a foreign power, events with which the Zealot takeover of the temple and the nation’s headlong rush into war against Rome would readily compare. ‘Wars and rumours of war’ are symptomatic of the ‘birth pangs’ noted earlier, of which the looming crisis that will result in the destruction of the temple is presented as a specific instance. As such, the disciples should not be alarmed when they see the nation heading to war (cf. 13:7); however, when they see it approaching they should waste no time to take flight and head for the hills.¹¹⁸ During the Maccabean revolt, the Jewish resistance

¹¹⁴ Josephus, *War* 4.151-57, 163, 201.

¹¹⁵ Watts, ‘Mark’, 224.

¹¹⁶ Watts, ‘Mark’, 224.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Snow, ‘Let the Reader Understand’, 476-77, who, based upon the intertexture with Jeremiah 7 in Mark 11-13, and particularly to the occurrence of βδέλυγμα in 7:30 (LXX) and ἐρήμωσις in 7:34 (LXX), argues that “‘the abomination of desolation’ refers to the corruption of the elders, scribes, and chief priests... [and] underscores the culpability of the temple leadership for the demise of their institution” (77). See also Perkins, ‘Israel’s Obduracy’, 232-38.

¹¹⁸ Pace Adela Collins, who *contrasts* the ‘birth pangs’ in 13:7ff. with the ‘desolating sacrilege’ in 13:14ff. For Collins, “[v]erse 7 begins with ‘Now when you hear’ (ὅταν δὲ ἀκούσητε), and v. 14 with ‘Now when you see’ (ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε). In v.7, the audience is told not to be alarmed, because the end is not yet. On the contrary, in v. 14 and what follows, it is implied that they *should* be alarmed!” (Collins, *Mark*, 607; emphasis original). Our argument is that the transition from ‘hearing’ (13:7) to

movement fled to the hills in order to consolidate and to commence a guerrilla campaign against the forces of Antiochus.¹¹⁹ For Jesus' disciples, however, the upcoming war is *not* theirs to fight.¹²⁰

Interestingly, while some later pseudepigraphal writings would reread Daniel, and particularly the 'son of man' imagery in Daniel 7, from a messianic perspective, a messianic hope plays no role within the book of Daniel itself.¹²¹ However, in the reapplication of Daniel in Mark, the appearance of false messiahs and false prophets feature strongly (13:5-6, 21-22). Jesus forewarns his disciples of a war looming between the Jews and a foreign power that will incite significant messianic and prophet interest from within the Jewish populace, but will inevitably result in the destruction of the temple as he has declared.

Josephus identifies a number of contenders bidding for the allegiance of their Jewish country folk in the lead up to the Jewish-Roman war who promised 'signs and wonders' (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, *Ant.* 20.168, cf. Mark 13:22) as divine authentication, with some also seeking the Jewish throne.¹²² For example, Theudas led his followers to the Jordan believing the waters would part for him at his command (*Ant.* 20.97), and the 'prophet' from Egypt stationed himself along with his followers on the Mount of Olives and announced that at his command the walls of Jerusalem would

'seeing' (13:14) is a movement from 'general' to 'specific', and that the parallels between 13:7 and 13:14, including the presence of false messianic figures in each instance (cf. 13:6 and 13:21-22), strengthens case for reading it this way.

¹¹⁹ Cf. 1 Macc 2:27ff; Wright, *JVG*, 351-53.

¹²⁰ Wright, *JVG*, 359.

¹²¹ Indeed, the book of Daniel stresses victory without human agency (Dan 8:25) with the only unmistakable divine agents identified being angelic (cf. Michael, 12:1). On the 'son of man' imagery see below.

¹²² See the discussion in Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 900-1 and France, *Mark*, 510-11, 528-29.

fall allowing him passage into the city (*Ant.* 20.169-70; *War* 2.261-62; Acts 21:38). The Roman procurator in each case swiftly suppressed these earlier impostors and deceivers, as Josephus labels them (*Ant.* 20.167), but later figures were instrumental in instigating and/or maintaining the war with Rome. Josephus notes the royal aspirations of Menahem, son of Judas of Galilee, who in 66 CE sought to assert his leadership over the Jews by force, seizing control over the temple, besieging the Roman guard and after slaying Ananias, the high priest and an advocate for peace with Rome, worshipped in the temple dressed in royal robes (*War* 2.433-44). Menahem was executed by his own countrymen, but later in 69 CE Simon Bar-Giora was able to command the allegiance of a large number Jews who were “obedient to him as their king.”¹²³ After the war, he was paraded along with other captives in Titus’ triumphal procession before being executed as the Jews’ commander-in-chief (*War* 7.154).¹²⁴

Mark’s Jesus predicts that troubled times lay ahead and that false messiahs and false prophets would arise and promote themselves as agents for Jewish deliverance only to draw the nation down the path to destruction. This would be a time of great tribulation¹²⁵ and Jesus’ disciples must be able to interpret the events and act accordingly.¹²⁶ Indeed, the impending destruction of the temple is to be viewed as divine judgement. Thus, Jesus forewarns his disciples (προείρηκα ὑμῖν πάντα,

¹²³ *War* 4.503

¹²⁴ France, *Mark*, 528, n.74.

¹²⁵ The description of the tribulation as such that is unparalleled from creation or any time afterward (13:19) is probably to be understood as hyperbole, although Josephus documents well the atrocities of the first Roman-Jewish war.

¹²⁶ E.g., Lot’s flight from Sodom, which became a paradigm for escape from eschatological judgement (cf. *Jub.* 16:6; Luke 17:28-32; 2 Pet 2:6-8). Cf. Marcus, *Mark* 8-16, 595.

13:23) so as to keep them from danger and deception; this is not their battle. Their focus lies elsewhere – the destiny of the ‘son of man’.

Jesus’ response: The vindication of the ‘son of man’ at the eschaton and the salvation of the elect (13:24-27)

Undoubtedly, the present passage is the most contentious within the eschatological discourse. To what do the ‘cosmic signs’ and the ‘coming of the son of man’ refer, and what is the relationship between this passage and the ‘desolating sacrilege’ passage that precedes it?¹²⁷ Representative of a more traditional reading is Marcus who suggests that in this passage “Jesus prophesies the disintegration of the universe and the return of the Son of Man in glory.”¹²⁸ For Evans, the cosmos is not destroyed; it trembles at the appearing of the ‘son of man’, who arrives for judgement and salvation following a period of future tribulation associated with the Antichrist. With slight variation, Adela Collins identifies two divine interventions, the first bringing judgement (the ‘desolating sacrilege’) and the second bringing salvation (the ‘coming of the son of man’).¹²⁹ Alternative readings suggest the ‘cosmic signs’ symbolise the destruction of Jerusalem itself in the same way Isaiah utilised the language to describe the fall of Babylon (cf. Isa 13:10). For instance, Watts has recently argued for seeing the ‘desolating sacrilege’ passage as the answer to the disciples’ request for a sign, and the ‘cosmic signs’ (13:24-25) as the

¹²⁷ We agree with Geddert that this is one of the key issues in interpreting Mark 13, but we find his conclusion that this relationship is intentionally ambiguous in Mark’s performance to be untenable. In our reading, the reason Mark’s Jesus identifies the imposters in 13:6, 21-22 as false is not only because they seek to usurp his role, but because they also incorrectly discern the times and so confuse the destruction of the temple with the *eschaton*, hence the reason why Jesus informs his disciples ahead of time (13:23). For Geddert’s thesis to hold, Mark’s implied reader and the disciples as Mark characterises them are encouraged to entertain the possibility that the false Christs and false prophets may actually be correct in associating the two events (cf. Geddert, *Watchwords*, 226, 253-55).

¹²⁸ Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 906.

¹²⁹ Collins, *Mark*, 615.

description of the temple's destruction. Thus for Watts, the Zealots' occupation of the temple brings to a head the abominations in the sacred precincts and warns the disciples that it is time to depart (13:14-23) before the city and the temple are destroyed (13:24-5). He is not alone in identifying the 'cosmic signs' with the fall of Jerusalem; Watts' position is representative of both France¹³⁰ and Wright.¹³¹ Moreover, Watts shares with France and Wright the view that the 'coming of the son of man' (13:26-27) does not refer to Jesus' second-coming, but the beginning of a new era whereby the "resurrected and ascended Jesus effects deliverance 'through his angels' of the elect from the beastly nations,"¹³² that is, via the messianic community's worldwide proclamation of the gospel. Clearly, further analysis is required with respect to the referent of the 'cosmic signs' and the 'coming of the son of man' sayings and the relationship between these expressions and the 'desolating sacrilege' imagery. These issues are the primary concern of the following discussion.

The 'cosmic signs'

The closest verbal parallels for the 'cosmic signs' in 13:24b-25 occur in the oracle against Babylon in Isaiah 13:10 (LXX) and in the oracle against the nations in Isaiah 34:4 (LXX). Importantly for our present discussion, the language in both Isaianic passages is clearly metaphorical. The twin oracles of Isaiah 13 and 14 forecast Babylon's destruction and its fall from world dominance (Isa 13:17). The day of the LORD (Isa 13:6, 9) is approaching for Babylon; divine judgement awaits the city (Isa

¹³⁰ France, *Mark*, 530-37.

¹³¹ Wright, *JVG*, 348-60.

¹³² Watts, 'Mark', 228; cf. France, *Mark*, 534-36; Wright, *JVG*, 363.

13) and its king (Isa 14:3-22). The cosmic language depicting the collapse of the creative order typifies this as an ‘un-creation’ event, an act of divine judgement on sinful humanity. Significantly, “it is the end of an age that it described... not the end of the cosmos.”¹³³ The era of Babylonian tyranny is coming to an end. Babylon has boasted in its splendour and its conquests; its king has elevated himself to divine status, yet like Sodom and Gomorrah, Babylon will be left desolate (13:19). For the house of Jacob, however, Babylon’s judgement is Israel’s deliverance. Framed within the two judgement oracles is a brief salvific promise (Isa 14:1-2) that anticipates a divine reversal of the present state of affairs with vindication of the descendants of Israel and their elevation to a place of dominance among the nations.

A similar theme runs through Isaiah 34-35, where YHWH, as the divine warrior, defeats the opposing nations (34:1-4), and Edom in particular (34:5-17), so that his people may return to Zion in joy and gladness (35:10). Reminiscent of the exodus event, those “nations that resist Yahweh and threaten Israel are to be ‘devoted’”¹³⁴ (חָרַם), subjected to total destruction (cf. Deut 20:10-18; Josh 10:1). ‘Un-creation’ language fittingly describes the judgement. However, as with Isaiah 13, the end of the cosmos is not in view. Rather, Edom’s Sodom-like devastation (34:9-10), which renders the land inhabitable for people and a haunt for wild animals (34:11-15), is juxtaposed in Isaiah 35 with language of ‘recreation,’ with the blind now seeing, the lame walking, the mute speaking, and the desert turning to bloom with pools and flowing streams (35:1, 5-7).¹³⁵ Isaiah, as with other Old Testament writings,

¹³³ John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (WBC, Vol. 24; Waco, TX: Word, 1985), 198.

¹³⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39* (WBCComp; Louisville, KY: WJK, 1998), 269.

¹³⁵ Watts, ‘Mark’, 226.

employs ‘un-creation’¹³⁶ and ‘recreation’ language metaphorically for divine judgement and divine salvation respectively.¹³⁷

The allusion to the judgement oracle against Babylon leads France, Watts and Wright to view the language in Mark as also metaphorical, only this time the recalcitrant city is Jerusalem not Babylon.¹³⁸ Although it is possible for the cosmic language in Mark to be read literally, there is nothing in the present passage to compel this reading, and indeed, the Isaianic allusions do suggest that a metaphorical reading is the better option. However, it is less certain that the destruction of Jerusalem is the intended referent. For instance, in Mark, the ‘cosmic signs’ take place “in those days” (ἐν ἐκείναις ταῖς ἡμέραις) “after the tribulation” (μετὰ τὴν θλίψιν).¹³⁹ Within the context of the eschatological discourse, ‘the tribulation’ referred to in 13:24 can only relate to the events surrounding the ‘desolating sacrilege’ (cf. 13:19). In our reading, the conjunction ‘but’ (Ἀλλὰ) contrasts the preceding passage with that which follows as the discourse transitions from the discussion of ‘birth pangs’, of which the ‘desolating sacrilege’ is a particular and significant example, to discussion of ‘the end’ itself.¹⁴⁰ The phrase “in those days” bridges the transition. In the eschatological timetable outlined in Mark 13, the destruction of the temple is an

¹³⁶ “The darkening of the sun and the failure of the moon to provide light constitute an undoing of the fourth day of creation (Gen 1:14-19)” (Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 328; summarising here Gundry’s suggestion). See for example Jer 4:23-26.

¹³⁷ E.g., in the Old Testament, cosmic signs including the shaking of the heavens (cf. Mark 13:25b) and earth accompany a divine theophany; see Judg 5:5; Ps 18:7-15; Joel 2:10-11, 30-32; 3:14-16. Cf. Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 313.

¹³⁸ See also Thomas R. Hatina, ‘The Focus of Mark 13:24-27: The Parousia, or the Destruction of the Temple?’, *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 6 (1996): 43-66.

¹³⁹ On the difficulty in discerning whether a temporal gap exists between 13:23 and 13:24 see Geddert, *Watchwords*, 229-31.

¹⁴⁰ Pace France, *Mark*, 532, who suggests, “It does indeed indicate a contrast between what has just been described and what it to follow, but that contrast does not need to be in time, but in the scale of events, as we move from preliminaries, horrible as they may be, to the climax of Jesus’ vision of what is to come.”

event that both precedes and yet is separate from ‘the end’ in the same way that a woman’s birth pangs precede and yet are separate from the actual delivery.¹⁴¹

However, just as birth pangs eventually transition into the delivery itself, so too, *after* the ‘desolating sacrilege’ event, but in the period identified as ‘birth pangs’, that is, “in those days” (13:24),¹⁴² the events of ‘the end’ will ultimately transpire.

Our reading, therefore, agrees with France, Watts and Wright that the ‘cosmic signs’ in Mark are to be understood metaphorically, but disagrees that the referent is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Rather, in view of the broader engagement with Daniel’s eschatological perspective, we suggest that referent is the eschatological judgement to occur at the *eschaton*. In other words, cosmic language functions in Mark in the same way that it does in Jewish apocalyptic literature, that is, to express the consummation of the eschatological kingdom.

With Daniel, the apocalyptic literature of the period reframed the prophetic hope for YHWH’s return to Zion (cf. Isa 52:7-8) so that it became an eschatological event marking the end of the present age. At the *eschaton*, YHWH would return to execute final judgement and bring about everlasting deliverance. Cosmic language fittingly expressed this ultimate theophany. Note, for example, the eschatological hymn in the *Testament of Moses*:

¹⁴¹ Cf. Adams: “Within Mark’s symbol system and narrative world, the destruction of Jerusalem and the consummation of the world/age are connected in principle... irrespective of how close to or distant from each other on the line of time they turn out to lie” (Edward Adams, ‘Historical Crisis and Cosmic Crisis in Mark 13 and Lucan’s Civil War’, *TynB* 48.2 (1997): 329-44 (332)).

¹⁴² The phrase “in those days” is frequently employed in prophetic literature to introduce eschatological oracles (e.g., Jer 33:15-16; Joel 3:2 [2:29]) (Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 327). The phrase is understood here with reference to the period of ‘birth pangs’, which is an indefinite period of time that includes, but is not restricted to, the events surrounding the destruction of the temple.

Then his kingdom will appear throughout his whole creation.
 Then the devil will have an end.
 Yea, sorrow will be led away with him.

...And the earth will tremble, even to its ends shall be shaken...

The sun will not give light.
 And in darkness the horns of the moon will flee.
 Yea, they will be broken in pieces.

It will be turned wholly into blood.
 Yea, even the circle of the stars will be thrown into disarray.

...For God Most High will surge forth,
 the Eternal One alone.
 In full view will he come to work vengeance on the nations.
 Yea, all their idols will he destroy.

Then you will be happy, O Israel!
 And you will mount up above the necks and the wings of an eagle.
 Yea, all things will be fulfilled...¹⁴³

In the hymn, 'cosmic signs' ('uncreation' imagery) accompany the establishment of the kingdom. The God Most High arrives on the scene to restore order by executing judgement on the nations and elevating Israel to its divinely ascribed status. The hymn proceeds to describe Israel's restored status in terms of their exaltation to the abode of the stars from where they will look down upon the nations on the earth (*T. Mos.* 10:9-10a). The language at this point, as in the rest of the hymn, is most likely metaphorical, providing "an imagistic contrast between the exaltation of Israel and the fall of its enemies."¹⁴⁴ It is evident that the hymn does not anticipate the destruction of the cosmos at the *eschaton*, but the fruition of its creational purpose. Indeed, for the writer, God "created the world on behalf of his people..." (*T. Mos.*

¹⁴³ *T. Mos.* 10:1, 3-5, 7-8. Translation: J. Priest, 'Testament of Moses', in *OTP* Vol. 1, 919-34. The book has been variously dated to the period of the Maccabean Revolt (c. 167 BCE), the period prior to the second Roman-Jewish war (c. 132 CE), or, and the evidence leans this way, during the first third of the first century CE. See also *Sib. Or.* 3:796-803. A fuller discussion of verbal and thematic parallels appears in Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 906-08.

¹⁴⁴ J. Priest, 'Testament of Moses', 933, n. f, g.

1:12) and thus the hymn closes with restored Israel giving thanks to God as the creator (*T. Mos.* 10:10).

Our hypothesis is that the ‘cosmic signs’ function similarly in Mark, and that Jesus employs the language metaphorically to speak of the judgement at the *eschaton* and to distinguish this from the destruction of the temple. There is a degree of ambiguity in Mark’s performance, however. Unlike the oracles of the Old Testament prophets and the visions of the post-biblical apocalyptic writers, the recipients of divine judgement are not identified in Mark. The ‘nations,’ usually the object of scorn in the former writings, already appear in Mark’s eschatological discourse as the destination for gospel mission (13:10).¹⁴⁵ It appears that it is not Israel’s traditional enemies that come under judgement, but those who make themselves enemies of the ‘son of man.’ Thus, it is most likely to be the adversaries of Jesus who are the implied subjects in Mark 13:26: “Then they will see...” (καὶ τότε ὄψονται)¹⁴⁶ Jesus’ vindication, “the son of man coming in the clouds” (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν νεφέλαις).

¹⁴⁵ So Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 907.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Mark 14:62, where Jesus informs the high priest and the council that they would witness the event.

The ‘coming of the son of man’

The ‘coming of the son of man’ imagery has attained an importance far beyond the initial role it played within Daniel 7 from which it derives.¹⁴⁷ A brief discussion of its function in the book of Daniel, which is disputed in present-day scholarship, is therefore essential from the perspective of our methodology for determining its function in Mark 13. Furthermore, because Mark’s performance contains ‘son of man’ sayings where there is no clear intertexture with Daniel, we explore the use of representative occurrences found elsewhere in Mark’s narrative before applying our findings to the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying in Mark 13:26.

Daniel 7 forms the literary and thematic bridge between the stories of Daniel and his friends, which are set in the royal courts of the Babylonians and the Medes and Persians during the sixth century BCE (Dan 1-6), and the apocalyptic visions in the latter half of the book, which transport the reader to the atrocities perpetrated by Antiochus (IV) Epiphanes of the Greek Seleucid kingdom during the second century BCE (Dan 7-12). Through repetition of the four kingdom schema, first introduced through Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in Daniel 2 where the Babylonian empire is identified as the first kingdom, Daniel 7 draws the reader’s attention to the period of the fourth kingdom and the actions of one king in particular. The chapter itself is a self-contained literary unit consisting of an introductory statement (7:1), Daniel’s vision (7:2-14), its interpretation (7:15-27), and a concluding remark (7:28). In his

¹⁴⁷ For an overview of what has come to be known as the ‘son of man debate’ see Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTSMS 107; Cambridge: CUP, 1999); Maurice Casey, *The Solution to the ‘Son of Man’ Problem* (LNTS 343; London: T&T Clark, 2007), 1-55. See also the recent survey in Andrew Angel, ‘The Son of Man: Jesus, Eschatology and Mission’, *Anvil* 26.3-4 (2009): 219-30.

vision Daniel first sees four beasts coming out from the sea one after the other, with the fourth being more terrifying than the first three, and having one particular horn that was exceedingly boastful (7:2-8). Daniel's vision then shifts to a heavenly court convened by the Ancient One¹⁴⁸ (7:9-10) where judgement is passed resulting in the death of the fourth beast and dominion removed from the first three beasts (7:11-12). The 'son of man' figure then appears before the Ancient One, "coming with the clouds of heaven," and to him is given an everlasting dominion over all the nations (7:13-14). It is evident that Daniel 7 mirrors Daniel 2, where the God of heaven sets up his eternal kingdom on the earth bringing to an end the reign of the fourth kingdom, only that in Daniel 7 that dominion is mediated through the 'son of man' figure.

In the interpretation of his vision, a heavenly attendant advises Daniel that the four beasts in the vision represent four kings, but that the 'holy ones' of the Most High will receive the eternal kingdom (7:17). Daniel inquires further regarding the identity of the fourth kingdom and in doing so recounts further details of the vision (7:19-22). He reports seeing the boastful horn making war against the 'holy ones', and that when the Ancient One came, judgement was passed in the favour of the 'holy ones' who receive possession of the kingdom. Thus, in Daniel's elaboration of the vision, he effectively substitutes the 'holy ones' for the 'son of man' figure. In the attendant's response (7:23-27), the fourth beast is now explained as a kingdom

¹⁴⁸ While Goldingay envisions the court scene on the earth (cf. 7:22, "the Ancient One *came*..."), and Collins that the locale of this court is indeterminate, Seow views the shift from prose to describe the four beasts from the sea (7:2-8) to poetry to describe the court scene (7:9-10) as likewise a shift in view from earth to heaven. Thus, there is a return to prose for the judgement and death of the fourth beast (7:11-12), and a shift again to poetry for the 'coming of the son of man with the clouds of heaven' (7:13-14). Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 164-65; Collins, *Daniel*, 300; C.L. Seow, *Daniel* (WBCComp; Louisville, KY: WJK, 2003), 107.

from which various kings (horns) will arise. The final king to arise speaks against the Most High and interferes with the religious calendar and the law, wearing down the 'holy ones', who are subdued under his power for a three and a half year period. However, when the court sits in judgement his kingdom is destroyed and the everlasting kingdom is given to "the people of the holy ones"¹⁴⁹ (7:27).

Within the context of Daniel 7, an unmistakable relationship is evident between the 'son of man' figure from the vision and the 'holy ones' of the interpretation, in the same manner that the beasts in the vision are related to the kings/kingdoms of the interpretation. In his further recounting of the vision, Daniel speaks directly of the 'holy ones', omitting the imagery of the 'son of man' figure altogether (7:22).¹⁵⁰ It is apparent that the fate of the 'son of man' equals the fate of the 'holy ones'. This reading suggests that the 'son of man' figure (literally, 'one like a human being') in Daniel 7 is a symbol of the 'holy ones,' not an individual being in its own right,¹⁵¹ and that the 'holy ones' refers to the people of God in contrast to the pagan nations.

John Collins, however, offers an alternative reading which also demands consideration. For Collins, the 'son of man' figure (7:13) represents Michael, the leader of the angelic host, who features elsewhere in Daniel as the divine agent for Jewish deliverance (cf. 12:1), and the 'holy ones' represent the angelic host, who are the heavenly representatives of the people of God on earth (cf. 7:27, '*the people of*

¹⁴⁹ The genitive may be epexegetical, so the NIV, "the saints, the people of the Most High."

¹⁵⁰ See the argument in Collins against the suggestion that this represents later redactional activity. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 278, 319-20.

¹⁵¹ So for example, Gowan, *Daniel*, 108; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 169-72.

the holy ones’).¹⁵² He is able to find significant support for his thesis from the Qumran literature, particularly since the community believed itself to be in an inseparable relationship with the heavenly host. For example, the Community Rule affirms that God has caused his elect to inherit “the lot of the Holy Ones. He has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven.”¹⁵³ In the War Scroll, which draws significantly from Daniel 11-12,¹⁵⁴ the ‘holy ones’ are clearly to be identified with the angelic host: “For the multitude of the Holy Ones [is with Thee] in heaven, and the host of the Angels is in Thy holy abode, praising Thy name.”¹⁵⁵ The community’s relationship with the ‘holy ones’ is particularly significant in the eschatological battle for which the ‘holy ones’ join forces with the elect: “[T]he King of Glory is with us together with the Holy Ones. Valiant [warriors] of the angelic host are among our numbered men.”¹⁵⁶ Moreover, leading the assault is none other than the angelic prince, Michael, whom God appoints for “the defeat and overthrow of the Prince of the kingdom of wickedness.”¹⁵⁷

In sum, it is apparent that the Qumran community read Daniel in a manner consistent with Collins’ thesis, and it is probable that they associated the ‘son of man’ imagery with Michael. However, it is not conclusive that Daniel was originally understood this way; there is no mention of Michael in Daniel 7, and although the ‘holy ones’ might be understood as the angelic host, they could equally be understood as the people of Israel. Ultimately, it is the establishment of God’s dominion on the earth

¹⁵² Collins, *Daniel*, 304-10, 313-17; i.e., the genitive is understood as possessive.

¹⁵³ 1QS 11:7-8. This and following translations from the DSS derive from Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin, 1997).

¹⁵⁴ Vermes, *Scrolls*, 162.

¹⁵⁵ 1QM 12:1. The Hebrew parallelism is unmistakable.

¹⁵⁶ 1QM 12:7; abridged. The association between the ‘holy ones’ and the angelic host’ can also be evidenced in the pseudepigrapha, e.g., *IEn*.9:3. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 313-17.

¹⁵⁷ 1QM 17:5-8.

in the human realm that is the focus of Daniel's vision, however much related this is to the angelic realm.

Contributing to our caution in embracing Collins' thesis is the presence of other trajectories within Judaism during this period that came to see Daniel's 'one like a son of man' as a messianic figure. For example, the *Similitudes of Enoch*,¹⁵⁸ in an unmistakable reference to Daniel 7, associates the 'son of man' with the 'elect one', who is defined further as a pre-existent heavenly Messiah figure. In the second parable (*1En.* 45-57) attention turns to the role of the 'elect one' in the final judgement.¹⁵⁹

At that place, I saw the One to whom belongs the time before time... and there was with him another individual, whose face was like that of a human being. ...And I asked the one – from among the angels... “Who is this....” And he answered... “This is the Son of Man, to whom belongs righteousness, and with whom righteousness dwells.... This Son of Man... is the One who would remove the kings and the mighty ones... for they do not extol and glorify him, and neither do they obey him, the source of their kingship....

At that hour, that Son of Man was given a name, in the presence of the Lord of the Spirits, the Beforetime, even before the creation of the sun and the moon, before the creation of the stars.... He will become a staff for the righteous ones.... He is the light of the gentiles and he will become the hope of those who are sick in their hearts. All those who dwell upon the earth shall fall and worship before him; they shall glorify, bless, and sing the name of the Lord of the Spirits.... In those days, the kings of the earth and the mighty landowners shall be humiliated on account of the deeds of their hands.... For they have denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah....¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ E. Isaac '1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch', in *OTP* Vol 1, 5-90. Scholarly consensus identifies the *Similitudes* as Jewish and pre-Christian in origin.

¹⁵⁹ *1 En.* 46:1-5; 48:2-10; abridged. Translation, Isaac '1 Enoch', 34-6.

¹⁶⁰ Quite noticeable in this passage is the merging of several Old Testament themes around the personage of the 'elect one'. The prophetic 'messianic hope', second-Isaiah's 'servant', and Daniel's 'son of man' converge in the *Similitudes*' description of the 'elect one' in a manner not unlike the New Testament conflates such themes to explain the significance of Jesus.

Likewise, *4 Ezra*, dated post-70 CE, interprets Daniel's 'son of man' figure as the Davidic Messiah who will arise at the 'end of the age' to defeat Rome. In his fifth vision,¹⁶¹ Ezra describes a terrifying eagle – a clear reference to the Roman empire – that rules over the earth with much oppression. A lion-like creature then appears as a spokesperson for the Most High and speaking in a human voice pronounces judgement on the eagle. In the interpretation, Ezra learns that the eagle is the fourth kingdom from Daniel's visions (*4 Ezra* 12:11) and that the lion is the Messiah from the line of David, who executes judgement on the eagle and delivers the remnant of the people of the Most High (*4 Ezra* 12:31-34). What is notable in this account is the substitution of a 'messianic' figure for the 'one like a son of man' figure in Daniel chapter 7, even though Daniel is otherwise void of messianic hope.¹⁶²

Evidently, Daniel 7 gave rise to a variety of interpretative traditions spurred on by the enigmatic 'son of man' figure within the text. While it is certainly possible that the Qumran tradition represents the reading initially understood by Daniel's first readership, it is more difficult to envision a 'messianic' reading emerging from this background than it is imagining that both the 'angelic' and 'messianic' readings developed from the less sophisticated 'symbolic' reading opted for here. In other words, the 'angelic' interpretative tradition, found most notably in the Qumran

¹⁶¹ *4 Ezra* 11-12.

¹⁶² The references to the anointed prince/one in 9:25 and 26, is most likely a reference to the high priests Joshua and Onias III respectively. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 355-56; Gowan, *Daniel*, 135; Goldingay, *Daniel*, 260-62. For the view that a messianic reading of Daniel best fits its original context see Michael B. Shepherd, 'Daniel 7:13 and the New Testament Son of Man', *WTJ* 68 (2006): 99-111. Shepherd's argument, however, is prejudiced by his underlying polemic to demonstrate that the Gospels, and by inference, Jesus, interpreted Daniel 'correctly', that is, Jesus interpreted the Danielic 'son of man' saying messianically because that is how Daniel's author intended the saying to be understood. In other words, Shepherd's concern is to prove that Jesus' use of scripture concurs with and therefore validates his own hermeneutical method.

writings, and the ‘messianic’ interpretative tradition, witnessed to in the pseudepigrapha, and as we will argue also in the New Testament, represent trajectories from what was initially a purely ‘symbolic’ representation of the people of God. In sum, our assumption is that the enigmatic ‘son of man’ figure in Daniel 7 fuelled speculation within later communities who were able to find in this ambiguous figure an expression of hope that could be readily interpreted in light of the stories they associated with it. But for Daniel, the imagery may have been far less sophisticated, comparing the true humanity of the people of God with the pagan kingdoms representative of the primeval chaos in its opposition to God’s purposes for creation.¹⁶³

Having explored the ‘son of man’ saying in Daniel 7, we now examine the expression in Mark. In Mark 13 the background for the ‘son of man’ saying is clearly Daniel 7, but this is not true of its use elsewhere in Mark. How can we account for the various occurrences of the saying in Mark’s narrative as a whole? While uncommon in Greek, the expression is at home in the Aramaic of Jesus’ day, and it appears that the Gospel writers have preserved the expression in a literal translation into Greek.¹⁶⁴ That the expression ‘son of man’ served equally within Aramaic as an idiom referring variously to humanity in general (i.e., everyone), to an indefinite group of people (i.e., someone) or for personal self-reference (i.e., a person such as myself)¹⁶⁵ explains the more generic use of the expression throughout the Gospel, where a clear relationship with the Danielic text is not evident. Interestingly, in Mark the expression is found only on Jesus’ lips; no one else refers to him as the

¹⁶³ Cf. Wright, *NTPG*, 295-96.

¹⁶⁴ James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 728.

¹⁶⁵ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 726-28.

‘son of man.’ Of the fourteen occurrences of the ‘son of man’ in Mark, two speak of the present authority of the ‘son of man’, nine of the ‘son of man’s’ impending suffering and/or resurrection, and three of the ‘son of man’s’ future glory.¹⁶⁶

In isolation, the ‘son of man’ expression is at times ambiguous. For example, it is possible that Jesus’ pronouncement to the Pharisees that the ‘son of man’ is lord of the sabbath (Mark 2:28) is to be understood in the general sense as an affirmation of humanity’s privileged status over creation and therefore over the sabbath (cf. Ps 8:4).¹⁶⁷ But it is more probable that on this occasion, and particularly in the earlier pronouncement to the scribes regarding the ‘son of man’s’ authority to forgive sins, that a personal self-reference is intended. Importantly, however, in the context of Jesus’ proclamation of the coming kingdom and the several unambiguous allusions to Daniel,¹⁶⁸ the disciples, and Mark’s audience, learn to understand the expression in terms of the Danielic figure. Dunn may well be correct in suggesting that the Markan Jesus adopts this language with a deliberate play on words intended.¹⁶⁹ It appears that the expression functioned in a similar fashion to Jesus’ parables as a means of both disclosing and concealing his identity and vocation. For those who had ears to hear his kingdom proclamation, Jesus’ ‘son of man’ references would eventually be understood with explicit reference to the Danielic figure, the divinely appointed agent who mediates God’s kingdom on earth. For others, his pronouncements, like his parables, were obscure (cf. Mark 4:10-12).

¹⁶⁶ See Appendix Two. Cf. I.H. Marshall, ‘Son of Man’, in *DJG*, 775-81.

¹⁶⁷ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 741.

¹⁶⁸ Mark 13:26; 14:62; and possibly 8:38.

¹⁶⁹ Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 760.

It is interesting that the first two of the three ‘son of man’ sayings directed to representatives of the Jewish authorities occur early in the narrative and recount their opposition to and rejection of the ‘son of man’s’ present authority.¹⁷⁰ No further ‘son of man’ saying is directed to this group until the confrontation between Jesus and the Jewish leadership in the trial scene (14:53-64), where the messianic interpretation of the Daniel’s ‘son of man’ figure is finally made explicit. In his examination of Jesus, the high priest asks directly, “Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One” (σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ;),¹⁷¹ to which the Markan Jesus replies with an emphatic “I am” (ἐγὼ εἰμι),¹⁷² and explains further that his inquisitors “‘will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,’ and ‘coming with the clouds of heaven’” (ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ). Up until this point of the narrative, Jesus has resolutely resisted publically declaring his identity and role,¹⁷³ but by juxtaposing Psalm 110 with Daniel 7 in his response to the high priest, he unambiguously affirms it in the trial scene, the harbinger of his crucifixion. With France we assert that this is the “christological climax of the gospel.... The time for concealment is over, and the truth must be declared firmly and openly to those who presume to set themselves as judges over him.”¹⁷⁴ His self-disclosure, however, sets

¹⁷⁰ See Appendix Two.

¹⁷¹ The term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ is a circumlocution for υἱοῦ θεοῦ. That the Messiah was referred as the ‘son of God’ in late second-temple Judaism is attested in 4QFlor 1:10-13 based on the promises made to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13. Cf. France, *Mark*, 609.

¹⁷² Textual evidence for the longer response, “you have said that I am” (σὺ εἶπας ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι) is poorly attested, making the adoption of this reading unwarranted, even if it better corresponds with the more indirect responses of Jesus in Matthew (σὺ εἶπας) and Luke (ἐὰν ὑμῖν εἴπω, οὐ μὴ πιστεύσητε) (*pace* Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1005f.).

¹⁷³ Cf. ‘messianic secret’ above.

¹⁷⁴ France, *Mark*, 610-11.

in motion the final stage of his opponents' plot against him, which for his followers will forever redefine the messianic role in terms of the suffering 'son of man'.¹⁷⁵

Although the claim to be the Messiah of Davidic descent, even with the link to Daniel's 'son of man' figure, does not constitute blasphemy in the strict sense (cf. Exod 22:28; Lev 24:15-16),¹⁷⁶ that Jesus, whom the Jewish leadership considered to be in league with Beelzebul (3:22), a sabbath breaker (2:24; 3:2), with no regard to the traditions of the elders (7:5), and a dangerous influence upon the general populace (11:18), claimed this unique role within the divine economy for himself, was preposterous from the high priest's perspective and accounted to blasphemy.¹⁷⁷ Jesus' response combines Psalm 110:1, which celebrates the privileged status of the Davidic king as God's 'right-hand man' (cf. Ps 80:17), with the vindicated 'son of man' figure from Daniel 7:13, thus encouraging a messianic reading of the latter. Like Daniel's 'son of man', Jesus is Israel's representative, only now in a sociological sense as their messianic king (cf. 8:29; 14:62).¹⁷⁸ Psalm 110 affirms divine endorsement for the king's position and divine assistance in obtaining victory over his enemies. The call to 'sit at YHWH's right hand' is manifestly

¹⁷⁵ Cf. M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville, KY: WJK, 2006), 413.

¹⁷⁶ The Mishnah reserves the charge of blasphemy to a case where the Name itself is pronounced (cf. *m. Sanh.* 7:5), although the charge might not have been as tightly defined during the first century CE. Cf. D.L. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus* (WUNT 2.106; Tübingen: Mohr, 1998). Any charge of blasphemy in Jesus' response according to the narrower definition is muted with 'the Power' inserted as a circumlocution for divine name in Jesus' allusion to Psalm 110:1.

¹⁷⁷ The tearing of garments is the appropriate response to hearing blasphemy (cf. *m. Sanh.* 7:5. See also 2 Kgs 19:1, 4, 6, 22). That the high priest is elsewhere forbidden to tear his vestments (Lev 21:10) may imply either that he was not in priestly attire at the time, or that Mark is highlighting the hypocrisy of the high priest's actions. Cf. Marcus, *Mark 8-16*, 1008.

¹⁷⁸ So Wright, *JVG*, 518.

metaphorical¹⁷⁹ and denotes the king's servitude to YHWH as the supreme ruler, as well as the divine authority vested in the Davidic king.

Given the metaphorical language of the quotations, it is not necessary to understand Jesus' comment, "you will see" (ὄψεσθε) implying that the high priest and his colleagues will literally see with their eyes Jesus "seated at the right hand of the Power" in the heavenly throne room, or, Jesus literally "coming with the clouds of heaven." Rather, Jesus' response affirms his authority, role, and vindication, and implies that his adversaries will witness this divine affirmation in the events that will follow, including the disciples' proclamation of Jesus' resurrection, the emergence of a new community centred in Jesus, and the fulfilment of his prophetic action against the temple.¹⁸⁰ But neither is it necessary to exclude from view Jesus' ultimate vindication at the *eschaton* when all his opponents will be subdued under his feet, and the 'son of man' is seen in all his glory. The events that his supposed judges will witness in their lifetime inevitably foreshadow the judgement at the *eschaton*. Thus, in both the immediately forthcoming events and in the *eschaton*, Jesus' accusers will witness his vindication. We suggest that Jesus' 'son of man' sayings must be interpreted in view of his teaching on the 'kingdom' so that the now-but-not-yet eschatological tension in his kingdom proclamation informs his 'son of man' sayings.

We are now at a place to return to the 'coming of the son of man' saying in Mark 13.

Since the language is clearly metaphorical in Daniel, and where the direction of

¹⁷⁹ John Goldingay, *Psalms* Vol. 3: Psalms 90-150 (BCOT: Wisdom and Psalms; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2008), 294.

¹⁸⁰ So Wright, *JVG*, 525.

travel is toward the Ancient One, not from heaven to earth, we agree with Wright that in the Markan context the allusion to the ‘coming of the son of man’ ought to be understood as a shorthand reference to the vindication of God’s suffering kingdom agent, rather than a literal description of travel from the heavenly throne room.¹⁸¹ Our reading therefore departs from the view that the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying is a reference to Jesus’ ‘second-coming’. While understandable from the perspective of the early church, the literalistic interpretation sits awkwardly within the plot of Mark’s performance and the broader narrative of Israel’s story. Mark narrates Jesus’ pre-crucifixion life and ministry, where even his closest companions misunderstand his explicit passion predictions, let alone a complex eschatological program including ascension, heavenly enthronement and second-coming. These developments in eschatological thought found elsewhere in the New Testament literature are not developed in Mark. The Markan Jesus predicts his suffering culminating in death, his resurrection, the demise of the temple and associated cultus, the emergence of a new order centred on him, the proclamation of the gospel message to all nations, and his glory at the *eschaton* when he will be vindicated as the agent of eschatological judgement and salvation, but the details are left sketchy at best.

However, while agreeing that the ‘coming of the son of man’ saying in Mark 13 is metaphorical, we do not see the vindication of Jesus at the destruction of the temple as the intended referent. Rather, we have argued that the focus of this portion of the discourse has moved from the events that will transpire within the disciples’ lifetime

¹⁸¹ So Wright, *JVG*, 361. Cf. §2 ‘The ‘Coming of the Son of Man’: Literal or Metaphorical?’.

to the period of the *eschaton* itself. Hence, the ‘cosmic signs’ speak of eschatological judgement upon the adversaries of Jesus; and the ‘coming of the son of man’ and the ‘gathering of the elect’ speak of eschatological salvation. The consummation of the kingdom is fittingly described in terms of the ‘son of man’ figure from Daniel who is vindicated before the Ancient One and receives the kingdom.

Moreover, we have argued that the eschatological discourse as a whole redirects the disciples’ attention from the destruction of the temple, which no longer serves to herald in the *eschaton* as per Daniel, to the vocation of the ‘son of man’. The destruction of the temple will not be the catalyst for the consummation of the kingdom; indeed any authentic messianic association with the event is expressly denied. The ‘gathering of the elect’, therefore, does not refer to the proclamation of the gospel by Jesus’ disciples as Watts has suggested.¹⁸² In Mark’s eschatological discourse, the proclamation of the gospel to all nations (13:10) is the activity of Jesus’ followers during the period of ‘birth pangs’, the period that leads up to ‘the end’ but is not ‘the end’ itself. Although this missionary activity certainly anticipates and participates in the eschatological harvest, in Mark 13:27 Jesus is speaking of the final ingathering at the *eschaton* at which time the ‘son of man’ directs the angelic host to gather together the elect from heaven and earth.¹⁸³ Thus, in our view, it is critical to recognise the eschatological tension between the ‘birth pangs’ and ‘the end’, or, in other words, between the destruction of the temple and the *eschaton*, in

¹⁸² Watts, ‘Mark’, 229.

¹⁸³ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 329.

interpreting the eschatological discourse. Indeed, we suggest that the illustration from the fig tree was employed for this very purpose.

Jesus' response: An illustration from the fig tree to assist in understanding the eschatological seasons (13:28-31)

Having completed his revised sketch of Daniel's eschatological timetable, Jesus graphically illustrates his point by referring to the seasonal changes experienced by the fig tree. Spring is not summer even though it leads naturally into it. When the fig tree sprouts new leaves it is an indication that summer is just around the corner, though *not yet* here. From the parable of the fig tree (13:28-31) the disciples are to appreciate the relationship between the temple's demise (cf. 13:14-23) and the vindication of the 'son of man' at the *eschaton* (cf. 13:24-27). The destruction of the temple will foreshadow the 'coming of the son of man', which will occur at a season after that event, not concurrent with it. Importantly, the generation contemporary with Jesus and his disciples is entering into springtime in the eschatological calendar; Jesus predicts that the destruction of the temple, accompanied by the appearance of false messiahs and false prophets, and intense suffering, will occur within this generation (cf., οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη μέχρις οὗ ταῦτα πάντα γένηται, 13:30).¹⁸⁴ While not to be confused with summer, the completion of these events indicates that the eschatological consummation is near and the ultimate vindication of the 'son of man' is at hand (cf γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἐπὶ θύραις, 13:29).¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ In Mark's Gospel, Jesus rebukes the contemporary generation for its preoccupation with signs (8:12), and judges it to be faithless (9:19), adulterous and sinful (8:38). It is 'this generation' (γενεὰ αὕτη) that will witness 'all these things' (ταῦτα πάντα) of which Jesus has predicted, namely, the destruction of the temple and accompanying atrocities that witness to the nearness of the *eschaton*.

¹⁸⁵ The implied subject of ἐστιν may be either the eschatological consummation of the kingdom, or ultimate vindication of the 'son of man' as the agent of the kingdom. The two are inseparably

The parable of the fig tree, therefore, functions as a similitude for the eschatological timetable just sketched. ‘All these things’ (ταῦτα πάντα) that will transpire within the disciples’ generation (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη) are evidence that the eschatological springtime has arrived and summer is fast approaching. On this Mark’s Jesus stakes his prophetic reputation; his words are more faithful and enduring than heaven and earth itself (cf., 13:31, ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ παρελεύσονται, οἱ δὲ λόγοι μου οὐ μὴ παρελεύσονται). The startling assertion equals those ascribed to YHWH’s word in Israel’s scriptures (e.g., Isa 40:7-8; cf., Isa 51:6), making the eschatological discourse the litmus test for the prophetic credibility of Mark’s Jesus. Our reading of the parable and the discourse that precedes it argues that Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple within the disciples’ generation, and that this foreshadows, although it is distinct from, the consummation of the kingdom at the *eschaton*, in the same way that spring foreshadows and yet is distinct from summer.

Jesus’ response: Concluding exhortation: Be watchful (13:32-37)

The tension between the eschatological spring and the eschatological summer directs the focus of Jesus’ final exhortation. Mark’s Jesus concedes ignorance of the timing of the final ‘day and hour’ (13:32), only the Father is privy to this information. Thus, when the disciples observe the events of springtime, they are to be all the more watchful (Βλέπετε, 13:31) and alert (ἀγρυπνεῖτε, 13:31) for summer is ‘at the door’. The proximity of the *eschaton* necessitates watchfulness on the part of the disciples, who must be ready for its arrival. The point is pressed through the parable of the

entwined. The idiom, ‘at the door’ (ἐπὶ θύραις) need not give weight to a personal subject (so France, *Mark*, 538).

doorkeeper, who must keep awake in readiness for his master's return from a journey, who will arrive at an unknown hour. Jesus exhorts his disciples to identify with the doorkeeper in the parable and to likewise "keep awake!" (γρηγορεῖτε, 13:35, 37). This final admonition brings the eschatological discourse to a close.

Concluding Comments

The primary aim of our exegetical analysis of the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 has been to determine the nexus between the 'desolating sacrilege' and the 'coming of the son of man' in Mark's performance. To this end we have applied the hermeneutic of 'story', which affirms firstly, that Mark's narrative as a whole is the primary context for the eschatological discourse, and secondly, that Mark's performance is an improvisation of Israel's story in view of the Jesus event. In Mark, Jesus is presented as the embodiment of YHWH's eschatological return to Zion. As Israel's Messiah and God's elect son, Jesus has been commissioned to inaugurate God's kingdom in Israel. Jesus explains his messianic vocation via his enigmatic 'son of man' sayings, which function like his parables both to reveal and to conceal his identity and mission. To his disciples, Jesus discloses that the way to his messianic enthronement entails his rejection by Israel's religio-political authorities. Ironically, while their speech and actions reveal self-interest, the authorities unknowingly participate in God's purposes, which include Jesus' suffering and death, and also his vindication, both in the immediate future, by resurrecting him from the dead, and at the *eschaton*, when his messianic enthronement will be revealed to all. In rejecting Jesus, however, the authorities and the temple regime they administer come under divine judgement in the form of the

destruction of the temple and the authorities' removal from the economy of God's kingdom purposes. To explain to his disciples the relationship between the destruction of the temple and his vindication at the *eschaton*, Jesus improvises upon the Danielic tradition. In doing so, Daniel's eschatological schema is reframed so that the desolation of the temple, while still functioning as the eschatological harbinger, no longer serves as the immediate catalyst for the establishment of the kingdom. The temple is the object of eschatological judgement and ceases to have a role in the divine economy, which from now on is implemented through Jesus, Israel's rightful ruler, and his followers. In the eschatological discourse, Jesus sharply distinguishes between the 'desolating sacrilege', which refers to the destruction of the temple, to occur sometime during the generation of the disciples, and the 'coming of the son of man', which refers to his own ultimate vindication as the Messiah, to occur after an indeterminate period at the *eschaton*.

We are now at a place to compare our reading of Mark's performance with that of his earliest extant interpreters. While we assume that Matthew and Luke offer their own fresh performances of the Jesus tradition and in the ensuing chapters we will read them as such, they nevertheless demonstrate significant engagement with Mark's narrative as one of their primary sources and therefore in this sense offer the twenty-first century reader a further avenue for exploring how Mark was interpreted by the early church.

§8 The Climax of Israel's Story in Matthew

Introduction

The present chapter aims to explore the significance of Israel's sacred tradition for the exegesis of the eschatological discourse in Matthew 24 and 25 with particular interest in the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' in Matthew's performance. It is argued herein that the perspective of the implied author in Matthew is of one who inhabits Israel's story. While Jesus is the unquestionable focus of the narrative, with his life, ministry, death and resurrection providing the content of the Gospel, it is nonetheless evident that the story of Israel provides both the themes and the broader context. The burden of the present chapter is twofold: firstly, through brief engagement with the opening chapters of the Gospel, it will seek to demonstrate that the hermeneutic of 'story' is a controlling influence in Matthew's practice of engaging with Israel's scriptures; and secondly, it will apply this hermeneutic to an exegetical analysis of the eschatological discourse in Matthew 24-25 with the view to identifying Matthew's presentation of Jesus' eschatological perspective. Priority is given to Matthew's own internal narrative structure, but with an eye also upon the broader story within which Matthew offers his performance of the Jesus tradition. The aim is to bring greater clarity to the literary context of the eschatological discourse by situating the text within the structure and plot of Matthew's narrative and the broader story of Israel.

Matthew's performance of the Jesus tradition and the hermeneutic of Israel's story

That Matthew¹ wishes his reader² to view the person and ministry of Jesus within the context of Israel's remembered past is evident from the outset of the Gospel. The opening genealogy claims direct links with Abraham, Israel's chief patriarch, and with David, from whose ancestry in some traditions at least the Messiah was to be born (Matt 1:1). In identifying Jesus' lineage, grouping together various personalities who appear in a variety of Old Testament texts,³ Matthew's Gospel continues the ancient tradition that affirms the intertextuality of these documents, and the conviction that together they tell the story of the people of Israel.⁴ Moreover, the Abraham – David – Deportation – Messiah framework (cf. Matt 1:17) provides a succinct outline of the story within which Jesus is clearly positioned as the climax.⁵ In Israel's story the divine purposes for creation are to be realised through Abraham and his descendants, and while Israel's subsequent covenantal unfaithfulness and consequential exile appeared to have jeopardised the fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham, and which were later re-centred upon David as Israel's idealised king,

¹ In the discussion below we use the name Matthew to refer to the implied author. For a review of scholarly opinion concerning the historical author see R.T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1989), 50-80.

² By 'reader' we have in mind the reader implied in the narrative in distinction from Matthew's historical audience. With respect to the latter, see David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992).

³ See Alkier: "[I]t can be said that every name in the genealogy is a metonymy for a story told in the Scriptures of Israel" (Stefan Alkier, 'From Text to Intertext: Intertextuality as a Paradigm for Reading Matthew', *HTS* 61.1-2 (2005): 1-18 (11)).

⁴ Cf. §4 'The making of Israel's Story'.

⁵ Matthew's 3 x 14 generation schema (cf. 1:17) is an artificial construct evidently designed not to produce an exact family tree, for in order to make the pattern work some generations are deliberately omitted (a common practice in the ancient world), but to identify Jesus clearly within Israel's story. Although one cannot not be certain, it is possible that the number 14 is significant as an example of gematria, crafted to emphasise Jesus' Davidic descent (i.e., the numerical value for David (דוד) = 4 + 6 + 4 = 14). As Brown notes, Matthew's symmetry belies the actual variance in timespan: Abraham – 750 yrs – David – 400 yrs – Exile – 600 yrs – Messiah (Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (New York, NY: Doubleday, new updated ed., 1993), 74-84). Cf. Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (WBC, Vol. 33a; Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 5-9.

Matthew, in the opening of his Gospel, declares their realisation through Jesus the Messiah, the son of Abraham and the son of David.⁶ Jesus the Messiah is the divine agent for restoring Israel and renewing the created order; upon him rests the hope of Israel, and indeed, all of humanity.⁷ In the ensuing infancy narrative, Matthew carefully weaves the events of Jesus' birth and early childhood into the fabric of Israel's sacred tradition. Below we briefly illustrate the import of Israel's story for three selected passages from the infancy narrative that have been particularly challenging for exegetes examining Matthew's use of scripture: the sign of 'Immanuel' (1:22-3); the call out of Egypt (2:15); and Rachel weeping for her children (2:17-8).

Matthew's Infancy Narrative (1:18-2:23)

The first of Matthew's 'fulfilment quotations' identifies Jesus with the promise of Immanuel in Isaiah 7.⁸ The reference does not function primarily to legitimate the scandal of Jesus' birth to an unwed mother, or to provide a proof text for the virgin birth, but rather serves to emphasise the parallels between Israel's story and the life of Jesus, and to explicate the significance of Jesus to the Jews of the first century.

Our thesis agrees with Senior's assessment:

⁶ So also Mervyn Eloff, 'Ἀπό...ἔως and Salvation History in Matthew's Gospel', in Daniel M. Gurtner and John Holland (eds.), *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 85-107 (94). We concur with Eloff's conclusion that Matthew's Abraham – David – Exile – Messiah schema "provides a *historical-theological backdrop* against which Matthew's story of Jesus is to be read and understood" (106; emphasis original).

⁷ The story-time in Matthew's performance thus extends from creation (cf. Matt 13:35; 19:4, 8; 24:21; 25:34) to consummation (cf. Matt 24:44; 25:31; 28:20). So Eloff, 'Ἀπό...ἔως', 93. See also Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 2nd ed., 1988), 41.

⁸ Cf. Matt 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14, 35; 21:4; 27:9. The 'fulfilment quotations' are a unique contribution of Matthew's performance to the Jesus tradition and feature throughout his narrative, although they are concentrated in chapters 1-13, and particularly the prologue (Matt 1-2). Cf. Donald C.P. Senior, *What Are They Saying About Matthew?* (New York: Paulist Press, rev. ed., 1996), 51.

The Old Testament quotations in Matthew are not mere 'proof texts' or embroideries on the gospel story but an integral part of the gospel's message, placing the story of Jesus in the broader context of Israel's history and underscoring the messianic authority of Jesus.⁹

Moreover, for Matthew, as with the classical prophets, Israel's story not only provided the broad context but also the raw material for communicating the import of God's present activity.

By means of his quotation from Isaiah, Matthew invites the reader to interpret the significance of Jesus in terms of Israel's story; hence the function of the cited text in its original context is critical for interpreting its role in the Matthean narrative.¹⁰

Thus, Matthew 1 receives further illumination through a reading of Isaiah 7 where we learn that the prophet Isaiah gave the sign of 'Immanuel' (lit. 'God with us') to the nation of Judah in response to King Ahaz's unbelief (7:10ff.). Ahaz refused to trust YHWH to deliver the nation from the threat of Aram and Ephraim, but rather placed his confidence in the might of Assyria (cf. 2 Kgs 16:5-9). The 'Immanuel' sign was that a particular young woman had conceived and would give birth to a son and that before the child would be old enough to know right from wrong, the two nations in question would be no more (7:14-16).¹¹ However, Ahaz would now have

⁹ Senior, *Matthew*, 61.

¹⁰ So also James M. Hamilton Jr., "'The Virgin will Conceive': Typological Fulfillment in Matthew 1:18-23', in Gurtner and Holland, *Built Upon the Rock*, 228-47 (230). Pace Bultmann, who suggests that "the Old Testament text only becomes of use when it is understood in a sense contrary to the original wording" (Rudolf Bultmann, 'Prophecy and Fulfillment', in Claus Westermann (ed.), *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1963, Germ. Orig., 1960), 50-75, 53). McCasland similarly argues that only by misinterpreting his source text can Matthew find relevance for the citation in his narrative. Cf. S.V. McCasland, 'Matthew Twists the Scriptures', in G.K. Beale (ed.), *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 146-52 (149).

¹¹ There is no evidence in Isaiah or in later Jewish reflection on the passage to suggest that the prophet considered it to be a miraculous virginal conception. It was not the nature of the conception that was significant, which presumably occurred through natural intercourse, but that the child would serve as a sign that the Syro-Ephraimite threat would not materialise. Cf. Rikki E. Watts, 'Immanuel: Virgin Birth Proof Text or Programmatic Warning of Things to Come (Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:23)?', in

a far greater threat – Assyria, his misplaced hope (7:17). Subsequently, the ‘Immanuel’ sign no longer served as a sign of YHWH’s deliverance, but of judgement, which would now come through the agency of Assyria (Isa 8:5-8).¹² In the context of the book of Isaiah, Ahaz’s unbelief is contrasted with the faith of his son Hezekiah (Isa 36-37).¹³ Unlike his father, Hezekiah, when the Assyrian threat materialised, relied completely on YHWH for protection and was eventually vindicated (Isa 37:36-38).

By reapplying Isaiah 7 to the birth of Jesus, Matthew assists his reader to explore the relationship between Jesus and Israel’s sacred tradition through the engagement of the two texts. Although the virginal conception is attested in the story of Jesus, it does not appear that scriptural support for the ‘virgin birth’ is the primary function of the quotation from Isaiah 7:14; rather, “Matthew seems more interested in the Immanuel motif than Mary’s virginity.”¹⁴ The bigger question is this: How will the Jewish people of Jesus’ day respond to the sign of ‘Immanuel’? For first-century CE Jews the subjugating foreign power was Rome, and there was some speculation that the Messiah from the line of David would deliver them from Roman tyranny (cf. *Pss. Sol.* 17). However, in Matthew’s performance, the true enemy of Israel with whom Jesus engages directly is the devil (cf. 4:1-11), and his primary messianic mission is not to destroy Rome, but to save Israel “from their sins” (1:21).¹⁵ For Matthew,

Craig A. Evans (ed.), *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 92-113 (100).

¹² Cf. Watts, ‘Immanuel’, 101.

¹³ Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39* (AB; New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 231-32.

¹⁴ Watts, ‘Immanuel’, 104. See also Hamilton, ‘Virgin’, 242.

¹⁵ For Powell, the major plot line in Matthew follows the conflict between God and Satan, which is “definitive for everything else in the world of this story” (Mark Allen Powell, ‘Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew’, in Mark Allen Powell (ed.), *Methods for Matthew* (Cambridge: CUP, 2009), 44-82 (70)). This conflict is resolved positively with Jesus’ death on the cross in accord with the will of the Father (cf. 26: 39, 42) and against the will of Satan (cf. 16:21-23).

Jesus is the sign of 'Immanuel' par excellence; YHWH has visited his people in Jesus, the Davidic Messiah; will their reaction follow that of Ahaz or Hezekiah?¹⁶ In other words, will the realisation of YHWH's return result in deliverance or judgement? Joseph's decision to remain committed to Mary invites the reader to a likewise positive response, however, as the plot of the narrative unfolds, it is evident that Israel's religio-political leadership is type-cast after Ahaz.¹⁷

An appreciation of how Israel's story functions as the controlling hermeneutic for Matthew will assist in following Matthew's logic when he draws upon this tradition. For example, at first glance, Matthew's suggestion that Hosea 11:1 is fulfilled in Jesus' departure from Egypt does seem a little puzzling.¹⁸ Hosea 11:1 recalls Israel's past deliverance from Egypt as the context for YHWH's condemnation of the Northern Kingdom for covenantal unfaithfulness:

When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. The more I called them, the more they went from me; they kept sacrificing to the Baals, and offering incense to idols (Hos 11:1-2).

Despite their deliverance and election as God's son, Israel has forsaken YHWH for the gods of the Canaanites. Hosea 11:1 itself, from which Matthew quotes, is a reflection on Israel's history and is devoid of any future sense. How can Jesus be seen as the fulfilment of this verse? The answer lies in understanding Matthew's perspective. For Matthew, Jesus' story *is* Israel's story; his personal journey

¹⁶ A similar challenge faces the disciples (and implied reader) at the close of the Gospel where they are commissioned to make disciples of all nations with the promise of Jesus' ongoing presence (Matt 28:19-20). How will they respond?

¹⁷ Like Ahaz, the Jewish hierarchy refuse to believe that God is present and active in their midst (e.g., 21:25, 32; 27:42), and so they act out of fear (e.g., 21:26, 46, cf. 26:5) and prefer to trust in the actions of a foreign power (27:1-2) rather than in God.

¹⁸ Matthew actually quotes Hosea 11:1 on the occasion of Jesus' departure to Egypt in anticipation of his return.

correlates with the nation's journey – there is a clear typological relationship between the two.¹⁹ Hamilton explains:

Matthew neither introduces this quotation because he is unable to find a better “proof text” nor because he has failed to understand what Hosea was saying. Rather, Matthew cites these words because just as the nation, the collective son of God, was led out of Egypt by the pillar of fire and cloud to failure in the desert, so Jesus, the singular Son of God, was summoned out of Egypt and then led out to the desert by the Spirit to succeed against temptation (Matt 4:1-11).²⁰

In Hosea's day, Israel was chided for covenantal unfaithfulness; Jesus, on the other hand, is Israel's true representative – YHWH's faithful son.

Matthew's practice of explicating the new in terms of the past continues the practice we witnessed within Israel's sacred tradition.²¹ For Matthew, the 'Jesus event' continues and completes that which has gone before. In his improvisation of the ancient writings in view of the Jesus story we witness the phenomenon of a developing tradition via its transmission. One further example from Matthew 2 illustrates the point. For Matthew, Herod's slaughter of infants in Bethlehem fulfils Jeremiah 31:15:

Thus says the LORD: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.

The quotation from Jeremiah 31:15 (Matt 2:18) illustrates the complex intertexture within the canonical writings – Jeremiah himself draws upon earlier events in Israel's story to reapply in his own context, only for his improvisation to be reapplied once

¹⁹ Typology is not an exegetical technique as much as “a way of thinking” which presumes that the divine economy unfolds in a unified manner and therefore identifies “historical and theological correspondences between different parts of God's activity among his people” (David L. Baker, ‘Typology and the Christian use of the Old Testament’, in Beale, *Right Doctrine*, 313-30 (317, 328)).

²⁰ Hamilton, ‘Virgin’, 243.

²¹ Cf. §4 ‘The Making of Israel's Story’.

again by Matthew in view of the Jesus story. The theme in Jeremiah 31 is one of hope: YHWH promises a remnant will return from exile.²² Rachel's sorrow is taken up by Jeremiah and reapplied to represent the sorrow of Judah's mothers during the Babylonian exile. While *en route* from Bethel to Ephrath (Bethlehem) with her husband Jacob, Rachel died during the birth of her second son Benjamin, whom she named *Ben-oni* (son of my sorrow) (Gen 35:19-20). Although the exact location of Rachel's grave is unclear in the biblical tradition,²³ Jeremiah associates the tragic incident with Ramah, the location from which the captives departed into exile (Jer 40:1). Jeremiah offers encouragement to those who weep, for YHWH declares that the exiled "shall come back from the land of the enemy" (Jer 31:16).

Thus, the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem (a town associated with Rachel in the biblical tradition) and Jesus' exile into Egypt evoke for Matthew the events of Jeremiah's day. Herod, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, ravages the sons of Israel. With the tragedy, however, Matthew's reader should also hear Jeremiah's prophecy concerning a promised return – the sorrow anticipates restoration. The correspondence between Jeremiah's day and Herod's massacre of infants in Bethlehem is not exactly equivalent, any more than the events of Jeremiah's day are equivalent to that of Rachel's death. Improvisation does not seek *idem* correspondence but *ipse*,²⁴ and for Matthew, as it was for Jeremiah, this is informed

²² The so-called 'Book of Consolation', Jeremiah 30-31, inculcates hope for those taken into exile by Nebuchadnezzar and anticipates the future restoration of both Israel and Judah to the land. Cf. Gerald L. Keown et al., *Jeremiah 26-52* (WBC, Vol. 27; Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 122.

²³ The exact location of Rachel's grave is uncertain. In Genesis 35:19, Rachel is said to have been buried somewhere *en route* from Bethel, north of Jerusalem, to Ephrath (Bethlehem). Rachel was remembered in Bethlehem by subsequent generations (cf. Ruth 4:11), and a site near Bethlehem is still venerated by Muslims today as the location of Rachel's tomb. However, Brown considers the alternative tradition to be earlier that locates Rachel's tomb in Zelzah in the territory of Benjamin (cf. 1 Sam 10:2), likely near Ramah (Brown, *Birth*, 205).

²⁴ See above, 91, 96.

by Israel's story; not just isolated texts within the biblical tradition, but also the "larger thematic and historical patterns suggested by them."²⁵

The narrative context of the eschatological discourse

Through brief engagement with Matthew's infancy narrative we have been able to establish sufficiently the importance of Israel's story for Matthew's performance of the Jesus tradition. Our attention now turns to the structure and plot of Matthew's performance with the aim to identify the narrative context of the eschatological discourse. Specific attention is given to the significance of the 'son of man' sayings for the development of Matthew's plot. This section concludes with a brief overview of the eschatological discourse itself in preparation for a more detailed analysis.

The structure of Matthew's performance

Gundry aptly captures the enigma of Matthew's controlling structure concluding "that the Gospel of Matthew is structurally mixed."²⁶ That is, while certain structural markers can be identified, none are sufficient to provide a comprehensive outline of the book.²⁷ One indicator of Matthew's structure is the repetition of transitional statements. For instance, a broad outline of the Gospel's movement can be observed in the phrase "From then on Jesus began..." (Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς...) occurring at 4:17 and 16:21. The phrase at 4:17 introduces the commencement of

²⁵ Michael Knowles, 'Scripture, History, Messiah: Scriptural Fulfilment and the Fullness of Time in Matthew's Gospel', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 59-82 (78).

²⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary of His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 11.

²⁷ Cf. David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (JSNTSup 31; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988).

Jesus' public proclamation of the Kingdom, and at 16:21, Jesus makes his first prediction concerning his passion. Thus, a three-fold structure can be seen that outlines three stages in Jesus' life and ministry: 1) preparation (1:1-4:16); 2) proclamation (4:17-16:20); and 3) passion (16:21-28:20).²⁸

Within this broad outline, Matthew structures his material around five sizable discourse passages (Matt 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24-25) where each discourse closes with the repeated phrase "And when Jesus finished [these sayings]" (Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς [τοὺς λόγους τούτους]).²⁹ For B.W. Bacon the five-fold structure suggested a clear parallel with the five books of the Pentateuch, and accordingly he divided Matthew into five books each with a narrative and discourse section, proposing Matthew's intention was to present Jesus as a 'new Moses'.³⁰ However, Bacon's 'Pentateuchal' thesis finds no support today. As Senior points out, Bacon's relegation of the infancy and passion narratives to 'prologue' and 'epilogue', because they did not fit into the five-book structure, is hardly satisfactory for a story all about Jesus.³¹ This does not mean that Bacon's observations are insignificant. The five 'sayings' passages provide clear markers to assist the interpreter of the Gospel.

Matthew shares with the first half of John's Gospel the feature of alternating narrative and discourse passages, although, unlike John, a direct relationship between the discourse and the preceding narrative is not readily evident. The result, suggests Hagner,

²⁸ Cf. Bauer, *Structure*, 73-108; Kingsbury, *Story*, 40.

²⁹ Cf. 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1. There are minor variations to the latter part of the clause (e.g. 7:28 and 19:1 add τοὺς λόγους τούτους; 26:1, πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους; 11:1, διατάσσων τοῖς δώδεκα μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ; and 13:53, τὰς παραβολὰς ταύτας).

³⁰ B.W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London: Constable, 1930).

³¹ Senior, *Matthew*, 27.

[is what] appears to be a seamless succession of pericopes, alternating presentation of deeds and words of Jesus that have usually been collected and arranged topically – seldom is there an interest in chronology – for the sake of the impact on the reader.³²

Matthew's aim it seems was to present a topical account of Jesus' words and deeds within the broad framework of his life and ministry. The five large discourses may have been arranged so as to provide a convenient compendium of Jesus' teaching for easy instruction to subsequent disciples (cf. 28:19-20). The eschatological discourse in chapters 24-25 makes up the fifth and last of these sections and addresses the destruction of the temple and its relationship to Jesus' messianic glory at the 'end of this age'.

The plot of Matthew's performance

The topical arrangement of much of Jesus' teaching and mighty deeds ought not to leave the impression that Matthew is devoid of dramatic plot. As noted above, the topical arrangements are placed within a broad chronological framework of Jesus' life and ministry, and, in similar fashion to Mark's performance, Matthew depicts Jesus' early ministry in Galilee and surrounding regions followed by one fateful journey to Jerusalem where his action in the temple calcifies Jewish leadership opposition towards him and sets in motion the schemes that will lead to his arrest, trial and crucifixion. Likewise, as in Mark, Jesus' conflict with Satan and the Jewish authorities, along with the challenges in teaching his disciples, drive the plot in Matthew.³³ There are, however, significant differences between Matthew and Mark.

³² Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, liii.

³³ Cf. Powell, 'Literary Approaches', 69-70.

Unlike Mark's performance, there is no apparent tension between Jesus and the narrator, which in Mark facilitated the secrecy motif.³⁴ The Matthean Jesus acts consistently with the narrator's description of him. For the disciples, and Matthew's reader, the enigma concerns less Jesus' messianic status and more the nature of both his messianic vocation and the kingdom he inaugurates. Accordingly, there are additional kingdom parables that are unique to Matthew's performance which function to delineate more clearly between the present and future aspects of the kingdom.³⁵ Moreover, as is the case in Mark, the disciples receive private instruction (13:10ff.); however, in distinction to Mark's characterisation, they are depicted on occasions as understanding Jesus' teaching (e.g., 16:12). One such noteworthy occasion is in reference to Jesus' teaching on the mysteries of the kingdom where Jesus concludes his teaching asking his disciples: "Have you understood all this?" (Συνήκατε ταῦτα πάντα; 13:51). Their answer in the affirmative reveals their receptivity to Jesus' kingdom teaching vis-à-vis the crowds and particularly the Jewish authorities.³⁶

It is interesting likewise to observe the specific audience of Jesus' 'son of man' sayings in Matthew and to consider these in view of his teaching on the kingdom. In the following discussion we argue that Jesus' kingdom sayings and his 'son of man' sayings must have been understood with reference to each other; in brief, Jesus reveals his messianic vocation as the kingdom agent by means of his 'son of man' sayings. When consideration is given to the recipients of these sayings a clear

³⁴ See above, 169.

³⁵ For example, the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:24-30, 36-43) and the parable of the Net (13:47-50).

³⁶ As with Mark, Matthew groups the Jewish leadership together as a homogeneous group, and as such, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes may be analysed as a single character. So Kingsbury, *Story*, 17.

distinction emerges between that which Jesus discloses to his disciples and that which he discloses to Israel's religio-political leadership.³⁷ Below, we trace Matthew's plot with an eye to the characterisation of the disciples and the Jewish authorities and with particular attention to Jesus' 'son of man' sayings.

The significance of the 'son of man' saying for the development of Matthew's plot

We have noted previously that the Markan Jesus exploited the ambiguity in the 'son of man' expression to both reveal and conceal his messianic identity and vocation in a manner similar to his use of parables.³⁸ There is no need to repeat the argument here, a restatement of the conclusion should suffice: For those who had ears to hear his kingdom proclamation, Jesus' 'son of man' references would eventually be understood with explicit reference to the Danielic figure, the divinely appointed agent who mediates God's kingdom on earth; for others, his pronouncements, like his parables, were obscure. The 'son of man' sayings are particularly significant in Matthew's performance: compared to the fourteen 'son of man' sayings in Mark, Matthew contains thirty, and as in Mark, these only occur on the lips of Jesus. Appendix Three outlines the occurrences of the thirty 'son of man' sayings in Matthew's performance noting the recipient/s of the saying in each case and lists Synoptic Gospel parallels where these exist.³⁹

³⁷ Pace Kingsbury. For Kingsbury Jesus' 'son of man' sayings function as a 'public designation' "primarily with an eye to 'outsiders' or the 'world,' Jews and Gentiles and especially opponents" (Kingsbury, *Story*, 100).

³⁸ See above, 220.

³⁹ Thirteen of the fourteen occurrences in Mark are paralleled in Matthew, the exception is Mark 8:31; and sixteen of the twenty-five occurrences in Luke, the exceptions being Luke, 9:22//Mark 8:31; 'Q' material, 6:22; 12:8; and 'L' material, 17:22; 18:8; 19:10; 21:36; 22:48; 24:7. Cf. I.H. Marshall, 'Son of Man', in *DJG*, 775-81 (776-77).

Ulrich Luz has recently proposed that the 'son of man' sayings in Matthew function on the lips of Jesus to disclose his vocation. Luz helpfully observes:

Matthew's Jesus speaks about "the son of the Man" when he speaks about his history and his way. As "the Son of the Man" Jesus is the one who is homeless, rejected, blasphemed, the one with power over sins, the one who is handed over, killed, risen and who comes for judgement.⁴⁰

It is our contention that the 'son of man' sayings explain Jesus' personal relationship to his message of the kingdom (cf. 4:17, 23). The nexus between the 'son of man' and the kingdom of God is made explicit by means of the intertextual links to Daniel in some of these sayings which invite the reader to reflect upon Jesus' messianic role as the son of David, in terms of the enigmatic 'son of man' figure from Daniel 7.⁴¹ It is the unmistakable relationship between Daniel's 'son of man' figure and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth that allows Matthew's Jesus to employ the 'son of man' sayings to describe his messianic vocation. In short, Jesus' role as the Davidic son is defined in terms of Daniel's 'son of man'. Moreover, as Kazen points out, "If this figure [the 'son of man'] was taken as faithful Israel, the kingdom of saints, vindicated after persecution and suffering, it might even have been possible to understand the suffering of the Son of Man as a scriptural idea."⁴² Precisely so, the implicit suffering and ultimate vindication of the 'son of man' in Daniel enables the Matthean Jesus to articulate his messianic role within a 'suffering son of man – vindicated son of man' framework.

⁴⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 110.

⁴¹ Pace Luz, who argues conversely: "For Matthew and his readers it [the 'son of man' imagery] did not serve to locate Jesus within a Jewish messianic expectation, even if historically its roots were there." Rather the expression "was part of their own Christian insider language" (Luz, *Studies*, 103). However, it is evident that Luz gives insufficient weight to the numerous intertextual links to Israel's scriptures within Matthew and the subsequent role they play in interpreting Jesus' actions and sayings.

⁴² Thomas Kazen, 'Son of Man as Kingdom Imagery: Jesus between Corporate Symbol and Individual Redeemer Figure', in Tom Holmén (ed.), *Jesus from Judaism to Christianity: Continuum Approaches to the Historical Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 87-108 (103).

The undeniable relationship between the kingdom and the ‘son of man’ in the Danielic context is assumed in Matthew’s performance so that Matthew’s Jesus may speak either of the coming rule and realm of God, or the ‘coming of the son of man’, that is, the vindication of the ‘son of man’ as God’s kingdom agent. The two concepts are not synonymous,⁴³ but they are inseparably related. This relationship is particularly notable when one observes the audience of Jesus’ ‘son of man’ sayings, for just as the mystery of the kingdom with its ‘now – not yet’ tension⁴⁴ is revealed only to the disciples, so too, Jesus’ messianic vocation as the ‘son of man’ with its present and future dimensions is revealed only to the disciples.⁴⁵

A sharp contrast emerges in Matthew between the positive, even if imperfect, response of the disciples to Jesus’ kingdom teaching and ministry and that of the consistently negative response of Israel’s religio-political leadership.⁴⁶ For Kingsbury, the primary character trait of the Jewish establishment is ‘evilness’.

As persons who are evil, the leaders have affinity with the devil (12:34) and their place is within his sphere of influence (cf. 12:26c). They “think evil in their hearts” (9:3-4), and Jesus discerns this (9:4; 22:18).⁴⁷

⁴³ See discussion in Kazen, ‘Son of Man’, 97-98.

⁴⁴ See Kanagaraj’s recent re-examination of the present-future tension in Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom. Kanagaraj concludes, “It is obvious that the content of Jesus’ message of the coming rule of God has two dimensions, present and future, pinned together” (Jey J. Kanagaraj, ‘Jesus’ Message of the Kingdom of God: Present and Future Tensions Revisited’, in B.J. Oropeza et al. (eds.), *Jesus and Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 24-34 (34)).

⁴⁵ I am indebted to Luz for this observation, who posits, “It is possible, I think, to speak about a ‘Son of the Man secrecy’, in the first Gospel which corresponds to the ‘Son of the Man misunderstanding’ of the outsiders. It consists of the fact that the disciples know the whole of the way of Jesus” (Luz, *Studies*, 107). However, it is evident in Matthew’s performance that the disciples still struggle to come to terms with key aspects of Jesus’ teaching.

⁴⁶ The function of Israel’s leadership was both religious and political, necessarily working in an uneasy subservient relationship with Rome and its representatives in order to secure mutual benefit. In practice, Carter observes, “...those in leadership positions such as priests and scribes administrated a society that benefited their own power, wealth, and status as part of the ruling group. They oversaw the temple practice and economy, and interpreted the sacred traditions in ways that reinforced the hierarchical structure of society” (Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 204).

⁴⁷ Kingsbury, *Story*, 18.

Jesus therefore labels them as hypocrites (15:7) and warns his disciples from imitating them (23:1-3; cf. 6:2, 5, 16). They are blind guides (23:16) who lead others into error through their false teaching; they present human traditions as doctrine and thus make void the commandments of God (15:3, 9). Even though they know the scriptures speak of the birth place of the Messiah (2:4-5) and of the coming of Elijah (17:10), they fail to perceive their fulfilment and thus reject both John and Jesus. Repeatedly, Jesus challenges them on their inability to understand the scriptures (12:3, 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:29, 31).⁴⁸ Due to their lack of spiritual and scriptural discernment the leaders are incapable of recognising that God himself is the source of Jesus' power and authority (12:24; 21:23).

The Jewish leadership misinterpret the present authority of Jesus as the 'son of man' and the manifestation of the kingdom in his person, teaching and actions. Six of the thirty 'son of man' sayings are directed to representatives of the Jewish hierarchy, five of which occur between chapters 8 to 12, where the opposition to Jesus' teaching and ministry intensifies, and culminates with Jesus refusing to offer any further sign to his adversaries than that of the sign of Jonah (12:38-41).⁴⁹ For example, it is a scribe who does not take up the invitation to follow the homeless 'son of man' (8:19, cf. 8:23),⁵⁰ and it is most likely the Jewish leadership who accuse Jesus of being "a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" (11:19; cf. 9:11). In encounters with Jesus, various representatives of this 'evil' consortium: deny Jesus' present authority as the 'son of man' to forgive sins, and accuse him of blasphemy (9:2-6); charge him and his followers with breaking the sabbath, although Jesus in

⁴⁸ Cf. Kingsbury, *Story*, 20; Knowles, 'Scripture, History, Messiah', 64-66.

⁴⁹ Cf. Appendix Three. The sixth saying is pronounced to the high priest during Jesus' trial, about which more will be said below.

⁵⁰ Luz draws attention to the absence of the "other boats" in Matthew's account (cf. Mark 4:36). Cf. Luz, *Studies*, 106.

response claims that as the 'son of man' he is lord over the sabbath (12:1-14); and ascribe the source of his authority over demons to Beelzebul, thus blaspheming against the Holy Spirit by whom Jesus as the 'son of man' casts out demons (12:22-32). Consequently, in their denial of and resistance to Jesus' present authority as the messianic 'son of man', the only further sign Jesus offers them is the sign of Jonah, a veiled reference to his resurrection from the dead, by which the rejected 'son of man' will be vindicated as YHWH's true kingdom agent (12:38-41, cf. 26:64).

Jesus' disciples, on the other hand, are his true kindred who do the will of the Father (12:46-50) and are privy to additional instruction concerning the nature of the kingdom and his role as the 'son of man'. They have been present with Jesus in his altercations with the religious leaders and throughout Jesus' public ministry,⁵¹ but it is the further instruction that they receive which gives them insight beyond their adversaries and the crowds.⁵² To the disciples alone are disclosed the mysteries of the kingdom (13:11), which include the understanding that contrary to apocalyptic expectation, the coming of the kingdom has not brought about the 'end of the age'.⁵³ The kingdom is present in the person and ministry of Jesus (12:28), but the consummation of the kingdom, including the final judgement, lies in the future

⁵¹ Luz, *Studies*, 105.

⁵² There is only one occasion where Jesus directs a 'son of man' saying specifically to the crowds (11:19), although they may have been privy to some of the sayings directed to the Jewish authorities (cf. 12:22-32). The crowds are a nebulous group who function in Matthew's performance as a foil to both the religious leaders and Jesus' disciples. The crowds are the primary target of Jesus' (and his disciples') public ministry (10:5-6); they hear his teaching (5:1; 13:2) and are recipients of his acts of healing and deliverance (4:23-25). In what is an unmistakable allusion to Ezekiel 34, Jesus views them as the victims of 'shepherd abuse' and seeks to restore them once again to YHWH (9:35-38). On their part, the crowds respond favourably to the ministry of John the Baptist (3:5, cf. 21:26) and are astounded by Jesus' teaching (7:28) and mighty deeds (9:8, 33). However, although exuberant in their adoration of Jesus as he approached Jerusalem (21:9) their commitment to him is less than that of a true disciple: they do not understand Jesus' role as the Davidic son in terms of the 'son of man' (16:13-14, cf. 21:11) and thus when the political tide turns decisively against Jesus they succumb to the persuasion of the religious leaders (who, actually view the crowds with both contempt and fear, 14:5; 21:15, 26, 46) and abandon Jesus to his executioners (27:20).

⁵³ The apocalyptic eschatological perspective appears to have been influential in the Baptist's thinking as well (3:11-12; cf., 11:2-6).

(13:41, 49). In the interim, Jesus teaches that those who are entering the kingdom live side-by-side with the children of the evil one (13:36-43). Importantly, the disciples learn that the one who is currently rejected by the religious establishment – the accused sabbath breaker, who befriends sinners and who is said to be in coalition with the devil – is none other than the ‘son of man’ who will judge the nations at the *eschaton*.⁵⁴

This much the disciples hear and it is confirmed that they understand (13:51), so that when Jesus asks his disciples concerning the identity of the ‘son of man’ (16:13),⁵⁵ Peter correctly attributes to him the messianic title (16:16) and Jesus immediately responds with positive endorsement (16:17). The rhetorical effect of Jesus’ affirmation of Peter is to further encourage the reader to identify with Peter and the other disciples as they receive additional insight from Jesus concerning his messianic vocation as the ‘son of man’.

Peter’s confession and Jesus’ acceptance marks the turning point to the third and final section in the narrative as Jesus shifts his attention to his passion in Jerusalem (cf. Ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς..., 16:21). At this point also, the disciples exhibit signs that, unlike Jesus’ previous instruction concerning the role of the ‘son of man’, they find his present teaching incomprehensible. What Peter and the other disciples struggle to understand is that prior to his vindication, Jesus must endure the full extremities of the current opposition to the kingdom (cf. 11:12⁵⁶) – the religious

⁵⁴ Luz, *Studies*, 103.

⁵⁵ The reference to the ‘son of man’ at this point is unique to Matthew’s performance.

⁵⁶ ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν ἡμερῶν Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ ἕως ἄρτι ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν βιάζεται καὶ βιασταὶ ἀρπάζουσιν αὐτήν. Both clauses are best understood negatively. “Mt 11.12 thus declares that violent men forcibly take the kingdom, which permits the second half of the saying to explicate the first: the kingdom of God is violently attacked because violent men forcibly seize it” (W.D. Davies

establishment will have him executed (16:21; 17:22-33; 20:18). In Matthew, the disciples, led by Peter, respond to the first of Jesus' three passion predictions with outright rejection of the idea (κύριε· οὐ μὴ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο, 16:22), the second with deep distress (ἐλυπήθησαν σφόδρα, 17:23), and finally the third with disinterest, being preoccupied with their own status once Jesus is enthroned in his kingdom (20:20-23).⁵⁷ Quite clearly, in Matthew's performance, the disciples fail to comprehend the looming crisis right up until Jesus' arrest (cf. 26:45). Rather, their focus is upon the vindication of the 'son of man' and the significance that his enthronement would have for their own lives, and there are a number of sayings from Jesus that encouraged them to expect this to occur soon.

The 'coming of the son of man' sayings in Matthew which clearly evoke the vindication of the 'son of man' figure in Daniel 7 reflect the 'now – not yet' tension in Jesus' kingdom proclamation. The 'son of man's' imminent vindication through his resurrection from the dead and in the destruction of the temple, prefigures his glory at the 'end of the age' when the enthroned 'son of man' sits in judgement over the nations. But the disciples struggle to distinguish the events. Thus, the solemn declaration that their mission to Israel will not be complete before "the son of man comes" (10:23),⁵⁸ and the later announcement that some of them "will not taste death

and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew* Vol. II (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 256). Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 307.

⁵⁷ Initiated in Matthew's account by the request of the sons of Zebedee's mother!

⁵⁸ Unique to Matthew's performance, 10:23 is the first 'coming of the son of man' saying in his narrative (cf. 16:27, 28; 19:28; 24:27, 30, 37, 44; 26:64) and significantly the first 'son of man' saying directed specifically to the disciples. Considering the context of the saying in Matthew 10, where the mission of the disciples is restricted exclusively to Israel (10:5-6), and in view of Jesus' post-resurrection commissioning of the disciples for worldwide mission, after having received "all authority in heaven and on earth" (28:18-20), France entertains the view that in this instance the 'coming of the son of man' saying is a reference to Jesus' vindication through his resurrection (R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 398). So also John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 427. Alternatively, Hagner suggests the reference is to the destruction of Jerusalem (Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 280). Both

before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (16:28),⁵⁹ fuel the expectation that in the near future Jesus will be enthroned in Jerusalem. However, these sayings relate to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and the destruction of the temple, but since the disciples have rejected the idea of Jesus’ impending suffering and death (16:22), they are unable to discern between his imminent and his future vindication. Consequently, Jesus’ affirmation that they who have left all to follow the homeless ‘son of man’ will be seated beside him in his glory “judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (19:28), further distracts the disciples from Jesus’ third passion prediction (20:18). Hence, when they witness Jesus’ prophetic action in the temple (21:12-17) and hear his prophetic pronouncement that the temple will be destroyed (24:1-2) they immediately connect this event with Jesus’ messianic enthronement. The eschatological discourse, therefore, provides critical instruction to correct this mistaken notion.

Importantly, nowhere in Matthew’s performance does Jesus elaborate for his disciples the role of the ‘son of man’ between his imminent vindication and his vindication at the *eschaton*. Matthew’s performance is more concerned to articulate the ‘present’ and ‘future’ dimensions of the kingdom and Jesus’ messianic role as the ‘son of man’ in terms of his ‘imminent’ suffering and vindication and his ‘future’ glory. This observation offers credence for the metaphorical reading of the ‘coming

the post-resurrection commissioning of the disciples and the destruction of the temple are possible referents, both represent Jesus’ ‘imminent’ vindication.

⁵⁹ Here the ‘imminent’ vindication (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ, 16:28) is juxtaposed with the ‘future’ (μέλλει γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεσθαι ἐν τῇ δόξῃ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀγγέλων αὐτοῦ, 16:27). Verse 27 refers to his enthronement at the ‘end of the age’ as judge over the nations (καὶ τότε ἀποδώσει ἑκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν αὐτοῦ), whereas 16:28 refers to his resurrection, whereby receiving all authority over heaven and earth he commissions the disciples as his missional agents, and the destruction of the temple, which demonstrates divine judgement upon the Jewish leadership. See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (WBC, Vol. 33b; Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 485-87.

of the son of man' language in the sixth and final address directed to the religious authorities – Jesus' response to Caiaphas at his trial. Offering an example of a literalistic reading, Luz posits:

Jesus' answer is a summary of the next two stages of history ἄπ' ἄρτι (from now on); the Son of the Man will be exalted and sit on the right hand of the divine Power and he will come with the clouds of heaven for the final judgement (26:64).⁶⁰

Yet such a reading is incongruent with Matthew's presentation of Jesus. Why would Jesus at this point reveal to his adversaries details of his vocation as 'son of man' beyond the sign of Jonah as previously announced (12:38-41) when even his closest confidants have not received this insight? Rather, as argued previously,⁶¹ the language is best understood as metaphorical: Jesus the rejected 'son of man' will be vindicated as YHWH's Messiah. From now on (ἀπ' ἄρτι) the Jewish authorities will see evidence of YHWH's approval of his kingdom agent both in Jesus' resurrection from the dead (cf. the sign of Jonah), which they will attempt to cover up (28:11-15), and in the subsequent preaching of the disciples, who, as the representatives of the restored Israel, fulfil Israel's vocation and the temple's function to be a light to the gentiles (28:18-20; cf. 21:13). Moreover, Jesus' vindication will be evident when his prophetic action and word against the Jewish leadership and the temple come to pass, and *their* sanctuary (cf. *your* house is left to you desolate, 23:39), which they have turned into a den of robbers (21:13), succumbs to divine judgement.⁶² Moreover, Jesus' imminent vindication and the imminent judgement to befall the temple

⁶⁰ Luz, *Studies*, 111.

⁶¹ See above, 220-23.

⁶² Cf. France, *Matthew*, 1027-28.

foreshadow his messianic glory at the *eschaton*, where the roles will be reversed and they will sit under the judgement of the enthroned 'son of man' (cf. 25:31ff.).⁶³

The eschatological discourse in overview

As noted above, the disciples' preoccupation with their perceived privileged positions once Jesus is enthroned as the Davidic Messiah distracts them from comprehending Jesus' upcoming passion which in turn prevents them from distinguishing between the 'present' and 'future' vindication of the 'son of man'. Jesus' prediction that the temple would be destroyed raises the question in the disciples' minds as to the relationship between this event and Jesus' enthronement. In the more private setting on the Mount of Olives in a two-part question they ask of Jesus the timing of the temple's destruction and also for the sign of his coming into his kingdom rule and the 'end of the age'. The clarification and differentiation of these two eschatological events is the primary objective of the discourse that follows. Jesus' response falls neatly into two main sections, the first expository, the second hortatory. His exposition outlines an eschatological timetable by which he carefully delineates between the temple's destruction and his vindication at the *eschaton* (24:4-36). The declaration that no one except the Father knows the timing of the latter (24:36) is clearly transitional and forms the basis for the exhortations on how to live faithfully during the 'in-between time' (24:37-25:46).

The following outline of the eschatological discourse is offered as a guide to the exegesis below.

⁶³ A double reference is likewise suggested by both Hagner and Nolland. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 800; Nolland, *Matthew*, 1132.

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- A. Jesus predicts the temple's destruction: The temple is spiritually corrupt and deserving judgement (24:1-2)
 - B. The disciples' two-part question: When will the temple be destroyed and what is the nexus between this event and Jesus entering into his messianic rule at the 'end of the age'? (24:3)
 - 1. The timing of the temple's demise
 - 2. The sign of Jesus' '*parousia*' and the 'end of the age'
 - C. Jesus' Response (24:4-25:36)
 - 1. Exposition (24:4-31)
 - a. 1st Cycle – The eschatological timetable sketched (24:4-14)
 - i. Birth pangs (24:4-8)
 - ii. Tribulation, false Christs & false prophets (24:9-13)
 - iii. The 'end' (24:14)
 - b. 2nd Cycle – The nexus between the destruction of the temple and Jesus' vindication at the 'end of the age' explained (24:15-31)
 - i. The desolating sacrilege (24:15-20)
 - ii. Tribulation, false Christs & false prophets (24:21-28)
 - iii. The 'coming of the son of man' (24:29-31)
 - c. Conclusion: The lesson from the fig tree (24:32-36)
 - 2. Exhortation (24:37-25:46)
 - a. The need for watchfulness: Three illustrations (24:37-39)
 - i. The days of Noah (24:37-39)
 - ii. Two in a field / grinding grain (24:40-42)
 - iii. The homeowner and the thief (24:43-44)
 - b. Three examples contrasting faithful – unfaithful behaviour (24:45-25:30)
 - i. The faithful / unfaithful servant (24:45-51)
 - ii. The parable of the ten bridesmaids (25:1-13)
 - iii. The parable of the talents (25:14-30)
 - c. The final judgement: The sheep and the goats (25:31-46)

The eschatological discourse: Analysis (24:1-25:46)⁶⁴

Our exegetical analysis commences with an overview of the Synoptic Gospel parallels in relation to Matthew's performance where brief attention is given to the unique features in Matthew's presentation. They come into particular focus in our analysis of the structure of 24:4-31, where we observe two cycles in Jesus'

⁶⁴ For a helpful overview of the history of interpretation of the eschatological discourse see Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 184-89.

expository material similar to that which we considered was implicit in Mark's performance, but in Matthew, the structure is more pronounced. This structure significantly informs our exegetical decisions within this critical section. Our chief focus is the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' in Matthew's performance and so the weight of our attention rests here along with the discussion of related key terms such as the '*parousia*', the 'end of the age', 'birth pangs' and 'the end'.

The eschatological discourse in Matthew and the synoptic traditions: An overview

The eschatological discourse in Matthew 24-25 reflects the complex nature of the Gospel traditions. Appendix Four highlights at the macro level both the degree of material Matthew has in common with Mark and Luke as well as the tradition unique to this Gospel alone. Three general remarks will be made here, with additional pertinent observations taken up in the discussion below. Firstly, it should be observed that while Matthew follows Mark's account closely where the tradition is shared,⁶⁵ a noticeable exception is the Matthean parallel to Mark 13:9-13 // Luke 21:12-19, which Matthew includes in his second major discourse – the commissioning of the twelve disciples (Matt 10:17-22a). Thus, apart from Matthew 24:9b (// Mark 13:13a // Luke 21:17) and Matthew 24:13 (// Mark 13:13b) the

⁶⁵ In discussing this particular passage, F. Neirynck suggests three reasons why Matthew's dependence on Mark better explains the data. Firstly, the "differences in the parallel sections of Matthew and Luke can be cited as minor agreements of Luke and Mark against Matthew." Secondly, Luke's omission of Matthew 24:26-28, 43-44, 45-51 is because they lack parallels in Mark. Finally, it is simpler to see Luke 21:12-19 as dependent on Mark 13:9-13 than to posit the view that he departs from his source in Matthew 24 to draw from Matthew 10:17-22 (F. Neirynck 'Note on the Eschatological Discourse', in David L. Dungan (ed.), *The Interrelations of the Gospels* (Louvain: LUP, 1990), 77-80 (78)).

material in Matthew 24:9-14 is mostly unique.⁶⁶ A further observation to be made is that where Matthew and Luke share material not found in Mark ('Q' material) the two are not in the same order. Luke places this material in his long journey narrative. Finally, it should be noted that except for the parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30 // Luke 19:11-27) the remainder of the material in Matthew 25 is unique.

Jesus predicts the temple's destruction: The temple is spiritually corrupt and deserving judgement (24:1-2)

Jesus' earlier prophetic action in the temple (21:12-17), his pronouncement that the kingdom will be taken away from the present religious establishment (21:43), and his denunciation of those who sit on Moses' seat (23:2) provide the backdrop for Jesus' prediction of the temple's destruction (24:2). The future desolation of the temple is indicative of the present regime's spiritual bankruptcy. Note the damning words in Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, "Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate" (23:38). The temple is no longer the house of the *Lord*, but *your* house. Jesus' departure from the temple (24:1) thus carries symbolic significance. Jesus, identified in Matthew as Immanuel, God with us, abandons the temple, evoking Ezekiel's vision of 'the glory of the LORD' departing the first temple prior to its destruction by the Babylonians (cf. Ezek 1; 10-11; 43).⁶⁷ Even the grandeur of the temple is minimised in Matthew's performance, which unlike Mark or Luke, uses no adjectives to describe the temple.⁶⁸ In Matthew, an undetermined number of disciples approach Jesus and simply point out the temple buildings (24:1, ἐπιδείξαι αὐτῷ τὰς οἰκοδομὰς τοῦ ἱεροῦ). Together, the above features prime Matthew's audience for the cessation of

⁶⁶ Hagner rightly observes that some of this material is loosely based on Mark (e.g., Matt 24:10 and Mark 13:12, and Matt 24:14 and Mark 13:10). Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 693.

⁶⁷ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *Matthew* Vol. III (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 334.

⁶⁸ Cf. Mark 13:1; Luke 21:3.

the temple's role in the divine economy. Jesus states it unambiguously: the temple will be destroyed, not one stone will be left upon another (24:2).

The disciples' two-part question: When will the temple be destroyed and what is the nexus between this event and Jesus entering into his messianic rule at the 'end of the age'? (24:3)

Jesus' prophecy regarding the temple's destruction sparks a curiosity in the minds of the disciples. When they are alone with him on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple the disciples ask Jesus to clarify his earlier pronouncement.⁶⁹ Here we may observe a significant shift in Matthew's account from that of Mark and Luke.

Matt 24:3b	Mark 13:4	Luke 21:7b
<p>πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος;</p>	<p>πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα;</p>	<p>πότε οὖν ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα γίνεσθαι;</p>

In Mark, with whom Luke has close affinity, the focus is clearly upon the timing of the temple's demise and its accompanying sign; no mention is made of Jesus' '*parousia*' or of the 'end of the age' as one finds in Matthew. By including these aspects in the introductory question, Matthew clearly signals to his reader the content and thrust of the following discourse. Jesus' teaching will address the two aspects of the disciples' question: 1) the destruction of the temple; and 2) the sign of Jesus' '*parousia*' and of the 'end of the age'.⁷⁰ As the discourse progresses it is evident that it is the latter of these that receives the most attention. One notes specifically the reoccurring use of the key terms: *παρουσία* (24:3, 27, 37, 39); and *συντέλεια* (24:3) /

⁶⁹ In Mark, it is the inner circle of the disciples – Peter, James, John and Andrew – who receive private instruction, but in Matthew no specific disciples are in view.

⁷⁰ Since one definite article governs both nouns, the phrase *τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος* is a single literary unit, hence τὸ σημεῖον assumes a double reference. Cf. Gundry, *Matthew*, 476.

τέλος (24:6, 13 [// Mark 13:13], 14); all of which, apart from one exception, are unique to Matthew.

The 'end of the age'

As with Mark's performance, Matthew's account engages with the themes and eschatology found in Daniel.⁷¹ The concept of God bringing a decisive and final end to pagan powers ruling over the people of God finds particular clarity in Daniel, where συντέλεια is employed as a technical term to speak of the eschatological time of 'the end' (Dan 12:4, 13 LXX). It marks the end of unprecedented tribulation (θλίψις) under the rule of foreign powers, and in particular the ultimate defeat of the king of the north, the arrogant 'little horn', who desecrates the temple and ruthlessly oppresses the people of God. Conversely, 'the end' also envisages the vindication and reward for the faithful. It speaks of the day when the Ancient of Days sits in judgement, condemning the oppressor and vindicating the saints of the most high (cf. Dan 7:13-18). It is truly an eschatological event that introduces a new reality on the earth: the dead are raised in the final judgement, either to everlasting life or to everlasting shame and contempt (Dan 12:2); and the saints receive a kingdom that endures forever (Dan 7:18). Importantly, the divine judgement upon the last pagan empire and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom (cf. Dan 2:44) are synchronised to the time of 'the end', so that to speak of one is to speak of the other.

⁷¹ See the discussion on Daniel's eschatological perspective above, 192-94.

The expression 'the end of the age/s' occurs frequently within Jewish apocalyptic literature.⁷² For example, in *4 Ezra* 7:102-115 the seer learns that while intercession for the ungodly is possible during this present age, there is no longer any place for intercession following the judgement to occur at the 'end of the age'. Eschatological judgement is final, after which no further change in a person's status before God is possible.

But the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come, in which corruption has passed away, sinful indulgence has come to an end, unbelief has been cut off, and righteousness has increased and truth has appeared (*4 Ezra* 7:113).⁷³

Thus, the final judgement marks the transition from the end of this present age to the 'age to come' and is both radical and permanent. In the new age, or 'world to come' (cf. *1 En.* 71:15⁷⁴), righteousness and peace reign forever, unbelief and sinfulness are no more. In short, the eternal kingdom has come.

Matthew's reader has already been introduced to the concept of the 'end of the age' in Jesus' earlier explanation of the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:36-43, cf. 13:24-30) and the parable of the Net (13:47-50).⁷⁵ In accord with Daniel's eschatological perspective and that found in the Jewish apocalyptic literature, the 'end of the age' is marked by eschatological judgement and salvation. In Matthew, this is closely linked with the vocation of the 'son of man' who directs his angels for the end-time harvest (13:41). But any reader of Matthew attuned to the Danielic

⁷² So Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. II, 429. E.g., *1 En.* 16:1; *T. Levi* 10:2; *T. Ben.* 11:3; *As. Mos.* 12:4; *2 Bar.* 13:3; 19:5; 21:8; 27:15.

⁷³ Translation: B.M. Metzger, 'The Fourth Book of Ezra', in *OTP* Vol. 1, 517-59 (541).

⁷⁴ Aune et al. identify this passage as the earliest reference to the phrase 'the world to come' (c. 200 BCE). Cf. D.E. Aune et al., 'Apocalypticism', in *DNTB*, 45-58.

⁷⁵ The term appears five times in Matthew (Matt 13: 39, 40, 49; 24:3; and 28:20) and elsewhere in the NT only in Hebrews 9:26, where the writer speaks of Jesus' once and for all sacrifice at the 'end of the ages'.

tradition would be keenly aware of a significant paradigm shift in Matthew's eschatological perspective from that of Daniel's. Matthew's narrative depicts the dynamic rule of God breaking forth at the present time in the person and deeds of Jesus (cf. Matt 12:28); in Matthew, the kingdom of heaven⁷⁶ is already being manifest on the earth. The paradox Jesus' kingdom parables seek to explore concerns the affirmation, on the one hand, that the kingdom is here now, and the declaration, on the other hand, that the 'end of the age' is still future. Thus, in his explanation of the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, Jesus introduces the idea of an intervening period where the people of the kingdom coexist with the people of the evil one. With the arrival of the kingdom, there is not an immediate weeding-out and judgement of the wicked.

Evidently, there is an overlapping of the ages in Matthew's performance; the new age arrives without immediately bringing to an end the present age. The kingdom that Jesus inaugurates does not arrive with irresistible force and immediate judgement, but in a very much subdued manner, that some could mistakenly consider to be irrelevant for the world scene. Yet, as the parables of the Mustard Seed (13:31-32) and the Yeast (13:33) portray, the kingdom's seemingly insignificant arrival contrasts markedly with its long-term universal effect. Moreover, eschatological judgement still awaits; this present age will come to an end. The eschatological harvest will arrive when the weeds will be gathered and burned, and wheat gathered

⁷⁶ The terms 'Kingdom of God' and 'Kingdom of Heaven' are best to be understood as synonymous expressions (cf. Mt 19:23-24//Mk 10:24-25//Lk 18:24-25), the word 'heaven' being favoured by Matthew for theological and rhetorical purposes as a metonym for 'God'. Arguing against the longstanding 'reverential circumlocution' explanation (cf. Gustaf Dalman, *The Words of Jesus*, trans. D.M. Kay (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1902)), Pennington has recently argued that "Matthew's choice to regularly depict the kingdom as τῶν οὐρανῶν is designed to emphasize that God's kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms, stands over against them, and will eschatologically replace them (on earth)" (Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2009; orig. pub. Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007), 321).

and stored (13:30); or, depicted with fishing imagery, at the 'end of the age' the net will be drawn and the bad fish will be sorted from the good (13:48-49).

Significantly, as discussed above, the Matthean Jesus describes the two-stage entry of God's kingdom on earth in both its present and future aspects through its association with the vocation of the 'son of man.' For example, in the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds it is the 'son of man' who both sows the good seed in the present and at the 'end of the age' directs his angels in the eschatological harvest. More will be said with regard to this presently.

The 'parousia'

The term '*parousia*' (παρουσία), in particular, requires some clarification as it also features prominently within the eschatological discourse (24:3, 27, 37, 39). It denotes: 1) 'presence', or 2) 'coming', 'advent' as the first stage in presence.⁷⁷ The word became technical term for 1) the manifest presence of a hidden deity, and 2) the visit of kings and high-ranking officials. In reference to Jesus it most frequently speaks of his coming in messianic glory to judge the world at the 'end of the age', and elsewhere in the New Testament implies his 'second-coming' or 'return'.⁷⁸ Without question, for Matthew's audience, situated post-crucifixion and post-resurrection, the term would connote Jesus' 'second-coming', and so commentators often ascribe this understanding to the disciples' question.⁷⁹ However, to read this meaning into the present text tends to skew the disciples' question. While it is possible that Matthew sought to place this question upon the disciples' lips

⁷⁷ BDAG, 78-81.

⁷⁸ E.g., 1Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23. The term is employed in the pseudepigrapha, in particular *T. Abra. A.* 13:4, where eschatological judgement is linked with "God's 'great and glorious Parousia'" (Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 338, n. 67).

⁷⁹ E.g., Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 688.

anachronistically in order to address concerns of his own day,⁸⁰ no such a reading is demanded either semantically or contextually.

The disciples in Matthew's narrative to this juncture show no evidence of any awareness of the events that will transpire over the ensuing days with Jesus' arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. Despite Jesus' prediction of these events, the disciples continue to argue and jostle for position in the kingdom they anticipate to be realised in the near future.⁸¹ The internal integrity of the narrative in its engagement with the broader story of Israel baulks at reading the disciples' question with Jesus' second-coming in view. They were not asking about the sign of Jesus' return – they were not expecting him to be going away!⁸² Semantically, for the disciples in this context, '*parousia*' connotes *Jesus' public entry into his messianic rule*.⁸³ Their question had to do with when he would ascend to David's throne, which, in accord with Daniel's eschatological perspective, and along with some eschatological speculation of the period,⁸⁴ would coincide with the end of the present age and the establishment of the kingdom in the 'age to come'; events the disciples were anticipating to occur in the near future. Granted, that for Matthew's implied audience the concept of Jesus' '*parousia*' develops in light of Jesus' death and resurrection to involve his future

⁸⁰ So Nolland, who describes the reference to Jesus' '*parousia*' here as "a deliberate anachronism," where "the wording of the question belongs to the early church period" (Nolland, *Matthew*, 961). However, as Nolland acknowledges, his reading at this point runs counter to the author's characterisation of the disciples to date, implying that there is significant incongruity in Matthew's presentation of the disciples with respect to their eschatology. While this could indeed be the case, it does give cause to consider readings that offer a more consistent portrait of the disciples.

⁸¹ See above, 247–49.

⁸² I am indebted to Wright, *JVG*, 341–42 for this insight.

⁸³ As Wright reflects, "The disciples now 'heard' his prophetic announcement of the destruction of the Temple as the announcement, also, of his own vindication; in other words, of his own 'coming' – not floating around on a cloud, of course, but of his 'coming' to Jerusalem as the vindicated, rightful king. What the disciples had naturally wanted to know was, when would Jesus actually be installed as king?" (Wright, *JVG*, 342; emphasis original).

⁸⁴ E.g., *Pss. of Sol.* 17.

‘return’, but such a perspective is unnecessary to require of the disciples’ question itself, and indeed is quite out of place in the context of Matthew’s plot.

Matthew has signalled to his audience that Jesus’ discourse will address both the destruction of the temple and Jesus’ enthronement as king at the ‘end of the age’ (24:3). What is the relationship between the two? For the fledgling messianic community clarity on this issue is critical. It is evident that when the first Roman-Jewish war did break out, approximately thirty-five years after Jesus’ death, the eschatological vision of the Dead Sea community, which had been informed by Daniel, encouraged their involvement in the war to their effective extinction.⁸⁵ Given the severity of the consequences that a misguided response could bring, attention to such a matter is most fitting in the context of Jesus’ prophecy. It is quite probable that Daniel’s eschatological schema influenced the disciples’ thinking at this point as well, and that on hearing Jesus’ prediction they immediately assumed that the destruction of the temple and the ‘end of the age’ would be closely related events, and specifically, that the temple’s demise would be the catalyst for Jesus’ ascension to David’s throne. Yet, as in Mark’s performance, this is precisely the perspective Matthew’s Jesus seeks to correct. Matthew intends the implied reader to see the temple’s destruction as a symbol of *God’s judgement on Israel’s leadership*. God will not be the deliverer, at least not in this event, *because he is the instigator*.

⁸⁵ See above, 128-34.

Jesus' Response: Exposition – Structural Analysis & Summary of 24:4-31

It is our conviction that the identification of the structure of Matthew 24:4-31 is critical for its interpretation, and particularly for determining the relationship between the 'desolating sacrilege' and the 'coming of the son of man'. Our aim is not to explore the various ways in which the structure has been construed,⁸⁶ but rather, we draw upon the insightful work of Vicky Balabanski who provides a comprehensive case for a two-sequence schema in Matthew 24.⁸⁷ Balabanski suggests that Matthew 24 exhibits similar stylistic features to apocalyptic literature where material is sequenced in cycles and where key elements in a series are "related both through *repetition* and *intensification*."⁸⁸ In Matthew 24, she identifies repetition as the major feature present, and intensification to a lesser degree, "not so much in the description of tribulation, but in the description of the End," which receives greater elaboration in verses 29-31.⁸⁹ The relationship between the two cycles is from general to specific, where Jesus outlines the general eschatological timetable in the first cycle (24:4-14), and then answers the disciples' question specifically in the second (24:15-31). In doing so, Jesus identifies the destruction of the temple in the second cycle (24:15) with the 'birth pangs' in the first cycle (24:8), with the implication that the destruction of the temple is an event that precedes 'the end' but it is not to be confused with the 'the end' itself (cf. 24:6). The cycles function to draw the reader's focus to the climax of Jesus' discourse – the 'coming of the son of man' (24:29-31). At the macro level, we observed a similar structure and

⁸⁶ E.g., George C. Fuller, 'The Olivet Discourse: An Apocalyptic Timetable', *WTJ* 28 (1966): 157-163; David L. Turner, 'The Structure and Sequence of Matthew 24:1-41: Interaction with Evangelical Treatments', *GTJ* 10.1 (1989): 3-27.

⁸⁷ Vicky Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache* (SNTSMS 97; Cambridge: CUP, 1997); *idem*, 'Mission in Matthew against the Horizon of Matthew 24', *NTS* 54 (2008): 161-175. Luz has also found Balabanski's thesis helpful and has adopted aspects of it in his recent commentary (cf. Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 196).

⁸⁸ Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 168; emphasis mine.

⁸⁹ Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 169.

with a similar ‘general to specific’ effect in Mark 13, but in Matthew’s performance the structure is given greater clarity.⁹⁰

When verses 4-14 and 15-31 are viewed side-by-side unmistakable verbal and/or thematic parallels emerge.

Table One: Parallels between 24:4-14 and 24:15-31⁹¹

‘Birth Pangs’/‘The End’ (24:4-14)	‘Desolating Sacrilege’/‘Coming of the Son of Man’ (24:15-31)
Wars, Famines & Earthquakes (24:6-7)	Desolating Sacrilege (24:15) [War; cf. Luke 21:20]
Tribulation Τότε παραδώσουσιν ὑμᾶς εἰς θλίψιν (24:9)	Tribulation ἔσται γὰρ τότε θλίψις μεγάλη... (24:21)
False Christs & False Prophets πολλοὶ γὰρ ἐλεύσονται ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου λέγοντες· ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ χριστός (24:5) πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφήται ἐγερθήσονται (24:11)	False Christs & False Prophets ἐγερθήσονται γὰρ ψευδόχριστοι... καὶ ψευδοπροφήται... (24:24)
...leading people astray βλέπετε μή τις ὑμᾶς πλανήσῃ (24:4) ...πλανήσουσιν πολλοὺς (24:11)	...leading people astray ...ὥστε πλανῆσαι (24:24)
Salvation ὁ δὲ ὑπομείνας εἰς τέλος οὗτος σωθήσεται (24:13)	Salvation οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθῃ πᾶσα σὰρξ (24:22)
The End ... ἀλλ’ οὕτως ἐστὶν τὸ τέλος ... (24:6) ...καὶ τότε ἦξει τὸ τέλος. (24:14)	The coming of the Son of Man ...ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (24:27) ...τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον... (24:30)

The parallels are striking, and demonstrate that a two-sequence schema is probable.

Moreover, it is the unique features in Matthew’s performance that strengthen the case for reading the material this way. As noted already, Matthew 24:9-14 departs from the other Synoptic accounts.⁹² Three key terms, unique to Matthew, appear in this section that are instrumental in establishing the parallelism between 24:4-14 and

⁹⁰ See above, 187-91; *pace* Balabanski, who believes that Matthew’s redaction of Mark results in a structure and emphasis quite unlike the Markan account.

⁹¹ Adapted from Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 155-56.

⁹² For details see Appendix Four and the discussion above.

24:15-31. Firstly, we should observe the inclusion of θλῖψις in 24:9. Its insertion here develops a clear parallel with 24:21, where Matthew follows the Markan tradition closely. Secondly, the addition of ψευδοπροφήται in 24:11, which together with the reference to those who falsely claim to be the Messiah in 24:5, establishes the parallelism with 24:24. Finally, Matthew includes a second reference to τὸ τέλος in 24:14 (cf. 24:6//Mark 13:7). The occurrence of the term in 24:14 is unmistakably denoting the eschatological ‘end’⁹³ and functions to bring the first cycle to a climax and to present ‘the end’ as the ultimate goal of the cycle.

Furthermore, it is evident that ‘the end’ in the first cycle is to be seen in parallel to the ‘coming of the son of man’ at the close of the second cycle. Here we observe that there is no equivalent to 24:26-28 in Mark’s performance; 24:26 is unique to Matthew and 24:27-28 are shared in common with Luke (Luke 17:24, 37b). The insertion of ‘*parousia*’⁹⁴ material at this point serves to draw the second cycle to a climax and results in a double reference to the ‘coming of the son of man’ in parallel to the double reference to ‘the end’ in the first (i.e., 24:6 and 14 parallel 24:26-28 and 29-31 respectively). For Matthew ‘the coming of the son of man’ is clearly an event of the ‘end of the age’ (cf. 24:3).

The two cycles pivot at 24:15 and here we find one further, if subtle, indicator in favour for the two-cycle schema. Matthew transitions from the first to the second cycle with the inferential conjunction Ὅταν οὖν in 24:15. Mark and Luke read Ὅταν δὲ at this point (Mark 13:14 // Luke 21:20). What is the force of οὖν here? Although the conjunction “may be used more loosely as a temporal connective in the

⁹³ See discussion below.

⁹⁴ See 24:27 and the discussion below.

continuation or resumption of a narrative”, it seems more reasonable to conclude that Matthew has an inferential relationship in mind.⁹⁵ In the two other occasions where the author uses the Ὅταν οὖν construction it is evident that an inferential relationship is intended, both of which are emphatic.⁹⁶ This provides good cause to suggest the same force in 24:15⁹⁷ where it links back to 24:4 at the beginning of the first cycle – Jesus’ concern is that no one lead his disciples astray. Read with an inferential force and in view of the parallels noted above we offer the following summary of the argument in 24:4-31.

Because of Jesus’ concern that no one lead his disciples astray, he sketches for his disciples in the first cycle a broad eschatological framework that distinguishes between events classified as ‘birth pangs’ and the event of ‘the end’ itself. ‘Birth pangs,’ such as wars, earthquakes and famines are all indicative of life in this present age as it anticipates its end. During this age the disciples must endure tribulation while at the same time being faithful to the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. False christs and false prophets, who will seek to lead people astray, mark this period, but ‘the end’ will not occur until the gospel has fulfilled its course among all nations. The inference drawn in 24:15 is that the disciples are to view the destruction of the temple as a specific example of the ‘birth pangs’ identified in cycle one and to distinguish this tumultuous event from the ‘coming of the son of man’ at the ‘end of the age’.

⁹⁵ BDF §451. Nolland likewise understands οὖν to have an inferential force here although he links it with the first part of the disciples’ question in 24:3. Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 968-69.

⁹⁶ Cf. Matt 6:2; 21:40.

⁹⁷ Pace Carson who concludes, “If it retains any inferential force in this passage, it is very light – ‘accordingly, when you see... then flee’” (D.A. Carson, ‘Matthew’, in Frank E. Gaebelin (ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 3-599 (500)).

Jesus' Response: 1st Cycle – The eschatological timetable sketched (24:4-14)

The primary concern of Jesus in this passage, as in Mark's performance, is the potential for his disciples to be led astray from true loyalty to the Father by those who falsely claim to be Israel's Messiah (24:5).⁹⁸ The issue is not that of people pretending to be Jesus (cf. ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματί μου), but those who claim the messianic role as their own (ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ χριστός).⁹⁹ In Matthew's performance, these false messiahs are coupled with false prophets (24:11, cf., 24:24), whose message is likewise successful in deceiving many within the populace. Given Jesus' earlier warning concerning false prophets (7:15-23), who he describes as wolves in sheep's clothing, it appears that some of these will either attempt to infiltrate or at least influence the messianic community. These are to be tested by their fruit, he cautions; regardless of the signs and works of deliverance they may perform, if they do not do the will of the Father as Jesus has instructed, then they have no part in the eschatological kingdom.

During the first and early second centuries, a number of revolutionary figures did arise, ultimately leading the Jewish populace into two debilitating wars against Rome.¹⁰⁰ In the first century some of these imposters presented themselves as prophets (e.g., Theudas, *Ant.* 20.97-99 and the 'prophet from Egypt', *Ant.* 20.169-70; *War* 2.261-62; Acts 21:38) and others, while not explicitly claiming to be the

⁹⁸ In this context 'to be led astray' (πλανᾶω) connotes being led into covenant unfaithfulness as it does also in critical passages in the LXX (e.g., Deut 13:6; 2 Kgs 21:9) and elsewhere in the NT (e.g., 1 John 3:7; Rev 2:20).

⁹⁹ So for example France: The would-be liberator "would be coming 'in Jesus' name' not because he is impersonating Jesus but because he is claiming the role and title which properly belong to Jesus" (France, *Matthew*, 902).

¹⁰⁰ For the messianic connotations in Simon Bar Kochba's leadership during the second Roman-Jewish war (132-35 CE) see Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian* (London: SCM, 1994), 601-5.

Messiah, held unmistakable royal aspirations (e.g., Menahem, *War* 2.433-34 and Simon Bar-Giora, *War* 2.503-10).¹⁰¹ Knowing the troubling times ahead for the Jewish people, and conscious of the confusion that false messiahs and false prophets would wreak upon the populace, Jesus sketches an eschatological timetable within which he is able to address their question and so enable them to discern the times as events unfold (cf. 24:32-36).

‘Birth pangs’

Jesus’ eschatological timetable distinguishes between two main periods: the ‘beginning of birth pangs’ (ἀρχὴ ὠδίνων, 24:8); and, the eschatological consummation at the *eschaton* (τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος, 24:6, 14 cf., 24:3). The Old Testament often employs the imagery of a woman in labour as figurative language for great suffering, frequently as a consequence of judgement, both upon Israel and its enemies.¹⁰² Isaiah, for example, speaks of Babylon’s final anguish as the day of the LORD breaks forth: “[T]hey will be dismayed. Pangs and agony will seize them; they will be in anguish like a woman in labor” (Isa 13:8). Likewise, Judah’s exile is described in terms of a woman’s travail only here it precedes the nation’s eventual redemption from Babylon:

Writhe and groan, O daughter Zion, like a woman in labor; for now you shall go forth from the city and camp in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued, there the LORD will redeem you from the hands of your enemies (Mic 4:9-10).

¹⁰¹ See above, 204-5; France, *Matthew*, 916.

¹⁰² E.g., Ps 48:6 (48:7 MT; 47:7 LXX); Isa 26:17; Jer 22:23.

Interestingly, Isaiah depicts Zion's eschatological redemption as a pain free delivery: "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son" (Isa 66:7).¹⁰³

The concept of eschatological birth pangs accompanying the 'end of the age' is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls¹⁰⁴ and the pseudepigrapha,¹⁰⁵ and, after the New Testament period, came to be associated particularly with the advent of the Messiah in rabbinic literature.¹⁰⁶ In Matthew, more so than in Mark's performance, Jesus carefully delineates between events that depict the 'beginning of birth pangs,' and the event of 'the end' itself. The distinction accommodates Jesus' earlier teaching on the kingdom (cf. Matt 13). Although his disciples as members of the fledgling messianic community participate in the life of the kingdom, they do so currently in the midst of the continuing present age. Jesus' disciples are to understand that the destructive forces they will witness in the spheres of human relationships and in nature are signs that this present age is in the throes of passing away.¹⁰⁷ These events must occur (δεῖ γὰρ γενέσθαι),¹⁰⁸ Jesus warns, and his disciples are not to be alarmed by such events (ὁρᾶτε μὴ θροεῖσθε) as if 'the end' itself were occurring. These events anticipate 'the

¹⁰³ L. Ryken et al. (eds.), 'Pain, Pangs', in *DBI*, 622.

¹⁰⁴ 1QH 3.7-10

¹⁰⁵ *I En.* 62.4; *4 Ezra* 4:42.

¹⁰⁶ France observes, "In later rabbinic literature the phrase, 'the labor pain [always singular] of the Messiah' comes to be used almost as a technical term for the period of suffering preceding the Messiah's coming, but this usage is not attested as early as the NT period" (France, *Matthew*, 904). Cf., *Mek. Exod.* 16:29; *b. Šabb.* 118a.; *b. Sanh.* 96b-97a.

¹⁰⁷ 'Wars, famines and earthquakes' are unlikely to be an exhaustive list, but rather illustrative. Luke's account, for example, includes plagues, portents and signs from heaven. Such events will occur as long as this age endures. In the first century the disciples would witness Rome at war with the Parthians (36 CE), a local war between Antipas and Aretas, king of Nabataea (36-7 CE), Rome in the grip of civil war (68-9 CE), and significantly, the first Roman-Jewish war (66-70 CE). Likewise, there are historical reports of earthquakes in Asia Minor (61 CE), Italy (62 CE), Jerusalem (67 CE), and Palestine (date unspecified), along with reports of widespread famine (c. 46 CE; cf. Acts 11:28; *Ant.* 3.320; 20.51-53, 101). See France, *Matthew*, 903-4.

¹⁰⁸ In this context, δεῖ assumes an eschatological force and functions to emphasise God's sovereignty over the events that are unfolding (Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 340).

end' but are not to be confused with the 'end of the age'; "the end is not yet" (οὐπω ἐστὶν τὸ τέλος, 24:6). Thus, while there is a close eschatological relationship between the 'beginning of birth pangs' and 'the end', this should not be confused with chronological proximity.

'The end'

In view of the parallelism between 24:4-14 and 24:15-31, our reading of Matthew understands τὸ τέλος in 24:6 and 24:14 as referring to the eschatological end as in 24:3.¹⁰⁹ An alternative reading is championed by France along the same lines as his commentary on Mark that links τὸ τέλος with the end of the temple.¹¹⁰ With respect to the occurrence of τὸ τέλος in 24:6, France reflects:

It is not spelled out here what that "end" (*telos*) is, but the same term will occur in v.14, where it leads into a description of the coming siege of Jerusalem. It seems probable there that the word has the same reference here, and that v.14 is a deliberate pickup of this pronouncement: "it is *not yet* the end...but *then* the end will come." The question which Jesus is here answering was about when the temple would be destroyed, and that is the "end" most naturally understood here.¹¹¹

For France, 24:4-14 do not map out a broad eschatological timetable culminating in the 'end of the age' as suggested by our exegesis, but rather they describe the events that led up to the destruction of the temple. Thus, in his reading, 24:15 marks the transition from Jesus' discussion of the 'beginning birth pangs' which are 'not the end' (24:6), to 'the end' itself (24:14,15ff.), that is, the destruction of the temple,

¹⁰⁹ So, for example, Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 340; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 691; *pace* Nolland, *Matthew*, 963. Nolland argues: "It can hardly be satisfactory to refer it to 'the completion of the age' of v. 3 and to separate this from the destruction of the temple.... The assumption seems to be that the destruction of the temple and the completion of the age are closely connected with each other." On the contrary, the logic of Jesus' argument as highlighted by the parallelism in the two-cycle structure is precisely designed to *distance* the 'beginning of birth pangs', which will include the destruction of the temple from the eschatological end itself.

¹¹⁰ See above, 198-99.

¹¹¹ France, *Matthew*, 903.

which is not the eschatological end (24:3), but the eschatological event that marks the beginning of the eschatological end.

There are two observations, however, which argue against the thesis put forward by France. Firstly, Jesus warns of imposters who will make messianic claims, which, according to the literature of the period where a messianic hope is expressed,¹¹² implies a significant role of some description in bringing an end to this age and ushering in the new. It seems more probable, therefore, since Jesus identifies these as *false* messiahs that he emphasises the point by noting that the *eschatological end* is not yet. That is, the evidence that these pretenders are bogus kingdom agents includes their inability to read the eschatological seasons and thus they confuse the ‘beginning birth pangs’ as the signs of the *eschaton*. Secondly, and prominent in Matthew’s performance, the characteristics that mark the period of ‘birth pangs’ – false messiahs and false prophets leading people astray, tribulation and the need for the disciples to endure – also feature in the account of the temple’s destruction.¹¹³ Thus, the evidence suggests that rather than distinguishing between the ‘birth pangs’ and the destruction of the temple, as France suggests, the Matthean Jesus intends to equate them. It seems better, therefore, to read τὸ τέλος in verses 6 and 14 as synonyms for συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος in verse 3.

The life and vocation of the disciples during the period of ‘birth pangs’¹¹⁴ receives specific attention in 24:9-14. In the midst of messianic and prophetic pretenders

¹¹² E.g., *Pss. Sol.* 17; *4 Ezra* 12:10-39; *1 En.* 48,52; *CD* 14:19; 19:10-11.

¹¹³ See Table One above.

¹¹⁴ The τότε at verses 9 and 10 does not suggest chronological progression but rather links the subject matter of these verses to the period of ‘birth pangs.’ “The force is something like: ‘as well as this’, ‘while this is still going on’” (Nolland, *Matthew*, 965).

(24:5, 11), lawlessness and lovelessness¹¹⁵ (24:12), and apostasy and betrayal¹¹⁶ (24:10), the disciples are called, in the face of tribulation,¹¹⁷ to endurance (24:13) and faithful proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations (24:14), even if need be to the point of death (24:9). The use of the verb ‘to deliver’ (παράδιδωμι; 24:9a) recalls Jesus’ earlier teaching to his disciples on kingdom mission, which he warned would be accompanied by persecution (cf. 10:5-42), and Jesus’ own passion predictions (cf. 17:22; 20:19-20). The disciples’ hear that their call to participate in Jesus’ mission will involve personal identification with his fate. Kingdom mission is now contextualised within the eschatological timetable sketched by Jesus and is thus commissioned for the entire period of ‘birth pangs’ right up until ‘the end’ itself (24:14, cf. 28:18-20). Moreover, the scope of the mission is expanded beyond the confines of Israel (cf. 10:5-6) to include all nations (πάντων τῶν ἔθνων).

Jesus’ Response: 2nd Cycle – The nexus between the destruction of the temple and Jesus’ vindication at the ‘end of the age’ explained (24:15-31)

With the eschatological timetable now in place, Jesus attends to the first part of the disciples’ question – the timing of the destruction of the temple – which he alludes to with language borrowed from Daniel and reapplies to the events that will soon unfold in the disciples’ lifetime (cf. 24:34). Subsequently, in specific response to the second

¹¹⁵ Earlier Jesus charged those who call him Lord and yet do not do the will of the Father with lawlessness (7:23). The charge is also directed toward the scribes and Pharisees, who, because of their hypocrisy, may be likened to whitewashed tombs (23:28). They attend to the minute matters of the law and forget the most significant – justice, mercy and faith (23:23). Lawlessness leads to the loss of love, the central ethic of the law (22:37-9).

¹¹⁶ The Parable of the Sower (13:1-9) describes fruitfulness or lack thereof of seed sown on various soils. In his interpretation of the parable, Jesus describes the seed that sprouts in the rocky soil but is later scorched by the sun as those who fall away on account of tribulation or persecution. Jesus warns in 24:10 that some, whose response to the message of the kingdom does not result in true discipleship, will betray the disciples. Judas’ betrayal of Jesus (26:14-16) would serve as a constant reminder.

¹¹⁷ Identified here with the period of ‘birth pangs’, tribulation is a present and ongoing reality for the followers of Jesus, the community living at the end of this age, who must endure such persecution, just as Jesus also suffered.

part of the disciples' question, Jesus contrasts the destruction of the temple with the 'parousia of the son of man' to occur at the *eschaton*.

The destruction of the temple to occur in the disciples' lifetime

Matt 24:15-16	Mark 13:14	Luke 21:20-21a
Ὅταν οὖν ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ρηθὲν διὰ Δανιήλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,	Ὅταν δὲ ἴδητε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,	Ὅταν δὲ ἴδητε κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ, τότε γινώτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς.
τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,	τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,	τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη

The Danielic source of the 'desolating sacrilege' imagery, unspecified in Mark, is made explicit in Matthew, as too is the location of the desolation – "in the holy place."¹¹⁸ The parenthetic comment that Matthew shares in common with Mark, "let the reader understand" (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω), may now function as an aside spoken by Jesus and refer to the reader of Daniel, although it is more likely to be the narrator's editorial comment, with either Matthew's reader or Daniel's reader as the referent.¹¹⁹ Either way it is abundantly clear that Jesus' discourse is to be read in conjunction with Daniel, whose eschatological visions are now reapplied to the destruction of the temple to occur in 70 CE. In Daniel, the abomination that causes the desolation of the temple is not specified precisely but it relates to the activity of the arrogant 'little horn' (Dan 7:11; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11), which the Jews of the early second-century BCE identified with the sacrifice of swine Antiochus (IV) made to

¹¹⁸ In Matthew's account the participle ἐστὸς is neuter in agreement with τὸ βδέλυγμα. In Mark the participle is masculine which may imply that a person is in view. See above, 202.

¹¹⁹ France, *Matthew*, 911, n.50.

Zeus Olympius in the Jerusalem temple (cf. 1 Macc 1:54). We have already discussed Daniel's eschatological schema in some detail,¹²⁰ and so here need only to remind ourselves that in Daniel's eschatological perspective the nexus between the 'abomination of desolation' and 'the end' is clearly drawn: the desolation of the temple initiates a three and a half year period of intense tribulation which is brought to an end with the establishment of God's kingdom. In short, the climax of Israel's story hinges upon the fate of the temple.

In Matthew, as in Mark's performance, Jesus recasts Daniel's 'abomination of desolation' for a new period¹²¹ and situates it within the eschatological timetable he has just drawn (24:4-14). The intense tribulation associated with this event and the accompanying presence of false messiahs and false prophets who lead people astray, mark the destruction of the temple as an event within the period of 'birth pangs', an event that must occur, but which is not to be confused with the eschatological end itself (cf. 24:6). Indeed, Jesus gives explicit instruction to his disciples to avoid any messianic expectation and association with the temple's demise (24:25-26).

It is sometimes entertained that the 'desolating sacrilege' in Matthew 24:15 refers not to the sacking of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple by the Romans in 70 CE, but "some future, eschatological defilement and destruction, and perhaps even activities of an anti-Christ."¹²² For some this may even imply the "future rebuilding

¹²⁰ See above, 192-94.

¹²¹ The re-application and modification of Daniel is not unlike that which occurs with Jeremiah's prophecy of a 70-year exile in the book of Daniel. Cf. Jer 25:11-12; 29:10; Dan 9 and the discussion in §7 'The Climax of Israel's Story in Mark'.

¹²² Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 346. See also, for example, David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).

of the temple”¹²³ following the destruction of Herod’s refurbished temple. However there is nothing in Matthew’s performance to indicate such an event in Jesus’ eschatological horizon. The impending demise of the temple is understood as divine judgement (21:12-13), and the permanence of its rejection affirmed by the agency of the kingdom being taken away from the priesthood and the Pharisees and invested in Jesus and his followers (21:42-5). The locus of God’s presence resides in Jesus, the Immanuel, whose presence continues to be manifest in the midst of the disciples (18:20; 28:20). When due weight is given to Matthew’s plot, the idea that the temple would be rebuilt and assume a significant future eschatological role is highly improbable, and may be held only with a significant degree of violence to Matthew’s performance. This does not rule out the possibility of reapplying Jesus’ discourse to later events as they arise, but it does deem unlikely such a referent within the Jesus tradition as Matthew presents it.

When due consideration is given to Matthew’s plot it is more probable that the ‘desolating sacrilege’ imagery refers to the 70 CE destruction of the temple notwithstanding Nolland’s assessment that “[o]ne looks in vain in Josephus’ accounts of the Jerusalem war for a *distinct* event that would stand out clearly as deserving the label ‘the desolating sacrilege’.”¹²⁴ We have noted previously, that, as prophetic discourse employing apocalyptic imagery, one should not expect a precise correlation between Jesus’ statement and the events surrounding Jerusalem’s sacking.¹²⁵ Josephus, for example, was particularly condemning of the Zealots’

¹²³ Turner offers this as a possible scenario, while for Pettegrew it is a critical assumption in his reading of the Olivet discourse. Cf. Larry D. Pettegrew, ‘Interpretive Flaws in the Olivet Discourse’, *TMSJ* 13.2 (2002): 173-90 (180); David L. Turner, *Matthew* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: MI: Baker, 2008), 580. We explore this further in §9 ‘The Climax of Israel’s Story in Luke’.

¹²⁴ Nolland, *Matthew*, 970; emphasis mine.

¹²⁵ See above, 202-3.

occupation of the temple under John of Gischala in 68 CE, accusing them of defiling the temple.¹²⁶ However, there was a significant amount of factional fighting in the lead up to and during the war that makes the identification of the ‘desolating sacrilege’ with the activities of the Zealots alone inappropriate.¹²⁷ In brief, there would be several indicators to confirm that the sanctity of the temple had been violated and that the nation was swiftly heading toward conflict with Rome. On seeing these events unfold (“Οταν οὖν ἴδῃτε), the disciples were to flee to the hills.

The instructions could not be clearer for the disciples; flight rather than fight was the directive. They were not to involve themselves in this war. The urgency of the flight is highlighted through two illustrations (24:16-18): the one on the rooftop has not time to collect valuables from inside the home; and, the one in the field, has not time to pick up one’s coat. Both emphasise the importance of fleeing without delay. As with a number of injunctions and statements in the passage, Jesus employs hyperbole to emphasise his point. Flight would naturally be more difficult for those who were pregnant or with young children, thus making the trauma particularly acute (24:19), and, because travel was restricted by both the confines of a sabbath’s day journey and the unfavourable conditions during the winter months, the disciples were to pray that the times and seasons would be advantageous for travel (24:20).

From the reports of Josephus on the horrors that the war with Rome brought upon the Jewish population the designation “great tribulation [θλίψις μεγάλη] such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be” appears most

¹²⁶ Josephus, *War* 4.151-57, 163, 201, 388.

¹²⁷ *War* 5.15-18, 98-105.

fitting.¹²⁸ The language here though, as earlier, is typical of apocalyptic hyperbole.¹²⁹ A similar expression occurs in Daniel where the eschatological judgement is foreshadowed by “the time of anguish,”¹³⁰ such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence” (Dan 12:1). The allusion to the Danielic passage seems evident enough and enables the disciples and reader of Matthew to identify the destruction of the temple as the example par excellence of the eschatological turmoil to precede ‘the end’; although it would not be the ultimate event. The judgement to befall the temple would be divinely shortened¹³¹ for the sake of the elect, that is, those who belong to the ‘son of man’ (24:31), but not as a result of God delivering the city and establishing the eternal kingdom through his messianic agent. Indeed, messianic expectation is expressly proscribed (24:23-5).

We have previously noted that Josephus identifies a number of contenders bidding for the allegiance of their Jewish compatriots in the lead up to the Jewish-Roman war, including some who promised ‘signs and wonders’ (τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, *Ant.* 20.168) as divine authentication, as well as those who sought the Jewish throne.¹³² These, we suggest, were the personages that Jesus had view in 24:23-26 and to whom the ascriptions ‘false messiahs and false prophets’ are quite appropriate. They wrongly believed their cause to be divinely sanctioned, completely unaware that by this means God was executing judgement upon an evil generation (cf. 12:39-45;

¹²⁸ In addition to the loss of life through battle or execution Josephus describes the effects the severe famine inflicted on the populace, cf. *War* 5.424-38, 512-18; 6.193-213.

¹²⁹ France, *Matthew*, 915. France lists the following parallels: Dan 12:1; Joel 2:2; 1QM 1:11-12; *T. Mos.* 8:1; Rev 16:8.

¹³⁰ ἡ ἡμέρα θλίψεως, LXX; καιρὸς θλίψεως, Theod..

¹³¹ France reflects, “The horror was in fact ‘cut short’ by the Roman capture of the city after five months, bringing physical relief to those who had survived” (France, *Matthew*, 915). The divine casualty of this ‘shortening’ is signified by the future passive without a subject (κολοβωθήσονται αἱ ἡμέραι ἐκεῖναι).

¹³² See above, 204-5, 266-67.

23:36). In Matthew's performance, Jesus instructs his disciples that there would be no divine intervention during this debacle; God would not be the deliverer because he was the instigator. The disciples therefore should not entertain or investigate messianic claims associated with this event; they were not to believe such reports or allow the signs of these imposters to dupe them into participation.

The delineation between the period of the temple's destruction and the '*parousia* of the son of man' receives further clarity in Matthew's performance with the inclusion of so called 'M' and 'Q' material in 24:26-28.¹³³ As we have demonstrated above, Jesus employs the term 'son of man' throughout the Gospel as a personal self-reference for the purpose of articulating his vocation as God's kingdom agent. The occurrence of the term '*parousia*' in 24:27 recalls its first instance on the disciples' lips in 24:3, and, as noted there, it is a mistake in this instance also to associate the term with the concept of Jesus' 'return'. Such a meaning is nonsensical in Matthew's narrative. The term does, however, refer to the eschatological denouement, when the 'son of man' will bring final judgement and salvation.

The issue that Jesus seeks to make clear at this point is that when the 'son of man' is revealed in his glory at the 'end of the age' it will be unmistakable, everyone will see it, like lightning flashing from east to west (24:27); in short, there will be no need for investigation (24:26). The proverbial saying in 24:28 is enigmatic¹³⁴ but may draw on Job 39:30b: "and where the slain are, there it [the vulture] is."¹³⁵ Jesus likens the certainty people will have in recognising the arrival of the 'son of man' in his

¹³³ See Appendix Four.

¹³⁴ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 353-54, for a list of various interpretations. Our reading follows the interpretation most favoured by contemporary commentators: "The coming of the Son of man will be as public and obvious as eagles or vultures circling over carrion."

¹³⁵ France, *Matthew*, 918.

messianic glory with the certainty one has that where vultures¹³⁶ are gathered there is a corpse attracting them.

Jesus thus contrasts the so called messianic appearances of the pretenders during the time of the temple's destruction (24:26) with the authentic appearance of the 'son of man' in his messianic glory (24:27-8) at the 'end of the age'. There is a clear parallel here to his earlier contrast between the 'birth pangs' and 'the end' itself (24:6), allowing the disciples and Matthew's reader to perceive that God's judgement upon the temple relates to final judgement in the same way that the 'birth pangs' relate to 'the end'. The destruction of the temple is an eschatological event that anticipates final judgement but is not to be confused with the eschatological denouement itself. The contrast between 24:26 and 24:27-8 provides the natural transition for Jesus' to respond to the second part of the disciples' question, "...what will be the sign of your coming and of the 'end of the age'?" (24:3).

The 'coming of the son of man' to occur at the eschaton

The destruction of the temple is a specific sign that the 'end of the age' is approaching, but as an example of the 'beginning of birth pangs', it is not the immediate sign. The eschatological denouement will occur suddenly, without further warning signs than those which the 'birth pangs' provide. The only further sign¹³⁷

¹³⁶ ἄετός may refer either to an eagle or a vulture. Because the saying depicts the birds feeding on a corpse (τὸ πτώμα) the latter is preferable. So, for example, NIV, NRSV, ESV.

¹³⁷ However one understands "the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven" (24:30), its concurrence with the 'coming of the son of man' itself provides no warning to the observer. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 359-60 for an outline of suggestions. It may be that Jesus is evoking the ancient imagery of a raised military ensign, which, accompanied with the trumpet call, rallied the troops for war. Davies and Allison note, "In later times, especially in Isaiah, the old custom was put to prophetic use: the Lord himself will raise an ensign and call for war (Isa 13.2-4), or the root of Jesse will 'stand as an ensign to the peoples' (Isa 11.10)."

will be that which accompanies the '*parousia*' itself.¹³⁸ The transitional phrase in 24:29 emphasises the suddenness with which the 'end of the age' will occur:

"immediately after the tribulation of those days." We suggest that the 'tribulation' alluded to here is not the specific tribulation surrounding the 'desolating sacrilege', although it is necessarily included, but the tribulation in general that typifies the period of 'birth pangs' to which 'those days' (τῶν ἡμερῶν ἐκείνων) refers (cf. 24:9).

This reading has much to commend it, particularly in that it resolves the angst that the appearance of the adverb Εὐθέως has caused exegetes of Matthew, for it seems to imply for some interpreters that Jesus prophesied the '*parousia*' to occur immediately after the destruction of the temple. Suggested solutions are plentiful, and vary according to how the exegete interprets the 'desolating sacrilege', 'tribulation', 'cosmic signs', and 'coming of the son of man' imagery. Proposals include: 1) either Jesus or Matthew did wrongly believe that Jesus' 'second-coming' or 'return' would occur immediately following the destruction of the temple in 70 CE;¹³⁹ 2) the 'desolating sacrilege' does not refer to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, but to a future event that will precede Jesus' 'return';¹⁴⁰ 3) the 'desolating sacrilege' has a double referent, referring both to the events of 70 CE and to a future event, and Jesus' 'return' follows the latter;¹⁴¹ 4) the 'desolating sacrilege' refers to the events of 70 CE, but Jesus' discussion transitions at either 24:21 or 24:22 from

¹³⁸ While France correctly points out that the term '*parousia*' does not occur in 24:29-31, we argue below, contrary to France, that there is no semantic distinction between ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in 24:27 and τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον in 24:30, providing we maintain the definition for '*parousia*' as suggested above. Cf. France, *Matthew*, 919, 923-24.

¹³⁹ E.g., Hagner argues that Matthew thought 'the end' would immediately follow the destruction of the temple. Cf. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 711-13.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., Gundry, *Matthew*, 481-82. In discussing the referent of the 'desolating sacrilege', Gundry concludes: "All things considered, a reference to the image of some evil, deified figure such as the Antichrist seems best" (482).

¹⁴¹ E.g., Turner, *Matthew*, 576, 581. Turner argues that "24:15-28 describes both the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and the ultimate eschatological persecution of God's people" (591).

addressing the period of tribulation surrounding the temple's destruction to discussing tribulation in general which is representative of 'this age';¹⁴² or 5) the 'coming of the son of man' does not refer to Jesus' 'return', but is metaphorical language depicting Jesus' vindication and enthronement at God's right hand, which will be evident to all when the temple is destroyed as he prophesied it would happen.¹⁴³

Common to the suggestions above, with the exception of option 4, is the assumption that Jesus identifies the 'desolating sacrilege' and the 'coming of the son of man' as chronologically inseparable events. Our exegesis, however, has consistently demonstrated that the Matthean Jesus carefully delineates between the 'desolating sacrilege' and the 'coming of the son of man', assigning the former to the period of 'birth pangs', which are not to be confused with 'the end', and the latter to the *eschaton*, which would occur in the future after an indefinite period time.

Accordingly, the transition statement in 24:29 is naturally read with the eschatological timetable Jesus has sketched in view (cf. 24:4-14). Hence, while the events are related eschatologically, they are not linked chronologically.

The 'cosmic signs' (24:29) and the 'coming of the son of man' saying (24:30-31) together form the climax of the second cycle in Jesus' exposition. The 'end of the age' is introduced in the first cycle in contrast to the period of 'birth pangs' ("...but the end is not yet", 24:6), although it receives no elaboration until the climax of the

¹⁴² E.g., For Blomberg, 24:21-29 refers to the 'great tribulation', which commences with the destruction of the temple and continues until Jesus' second-coming. Similarly also Carson, however he sees the transition occurring at 24:22. Cf. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew* (NAC, Vol. 22; Nashville, TN: B&H, 1992), 359; Carson, 'Matthew', 501-2.

¹⁴³ E.g., France, *Matthew*, 924. While we agree with France that the 'coming of the son of man' language is metaphorical and does not refer to Jesus' 'return', we disagree with him that the referent is the destruction of the temple.

second cycle. We have already discussed the ‘cosmic signs’ (cf. 24:29) in our exegesis of Mark where we observed that in the Old Testament¹⁴⁴ the language is metaphorical, employing ‘un-creation’ themes to depict divine judgement, and that in apocalyptic literature¹⁴⁵ it could be utilised to refer to the eschatological judgement at the ‘end of the age’.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, our previous exploration into the background of the ‘coming of the son of man’ imagery concluded that the sayings in Mark’s Gospel had points in common with a cluster of trajectories that came to view what was in Daniel a symbolic figure for the people of God¹⁴⁷ as a messianic figure who would be instrumental in establishing the kingdom of God on earth at the ‘end of the age’.¹⁴⁸ The language in Mark, we argued, is best understood as a metaphor referring to the vindication of God’s kingdom agent, his Messiah.¹⁴⁹

In Matthew, as in Mark, a literalistic reading of these sayings is to be avoided. Jesus is not describing the collapse of the cosmos and the flight path of his return to earth. The literary background of these expressions make this interpretative approach unlikely, but even more persuasive, a literalistic reading sits awkwardly within Matthew’s plot. The point made above with respect to the term ‘*parousia*’ is just as fitting here. There is no place in Matthew’s narrative that allows for the introduction of a second-coming motif at this point of the story. That is not to say that the eschatological denouement is not in view. The ‘cosmic signs’ speak of eschatological judgement upon Jesus’ adversaries and the ‘coming of the son of man’ and the ‘gathering of the elect’ speak of eschatological salvation. The ‘coming of the

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Isa 13:10; 34:4.

¹⁴⁵ E.g., *T. Mos.* 10:3-5. Cf. Joel 2:28-32 where eschatological judgement and salvation are in view.

¹⁴⁶ See above, 207-12.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Dan 7:13-14, 17, 22, 27.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. *1 En.* 46, 48; *4 Ezra* 11-12.

¹⁴⁹ See above, 213-26.

son of man' saying depicts the vindication of Jesus at the 'end of the age' when he, as the enthroned 'son of man', executes final judgement and eschatological salvation. Thus, there is no significant semantic distinction between 'τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον' in 24:30 and 'ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου' in 24:27.¹⁵⁰

Matthew's performance identifies those who mourn at the 'coming of the son of man' as "all the tribes of the earth" (πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς, 24:30). The passage echoes Zechariah 12:10-14 where the Israelite families mourn "when they look on the one whom they have pierced" (Zech 12:10). In Zechariah, the 'land' expresses its grief family by family (κόψεται ἡ γῆ κατὰ φυλὰς φυλάς..., LXX, Zech 12:12); the families of David, Nathan, Levi and others demonstrate genuine remorse for their actions which results in their forgiveness (Zech 13:1). Zechariah's national mourning becomes global in Matthew's context.¹⁵¹ The opposition Jesus and the disciples experience within Israel (10:5-25) is predicted to continue in the expanded world-wide mission (24:9, 14), thus, Jesus' adversaries also include all those from among the nations who hate the disciples on account of him (cf. 25:45). For these, the vindication of the 'son of man' at the eschatological judgement will be the cause of mourning. It is unclear whether this consists of genuine mourning brought on by repentance, or the grief in despair of the final judgement. Turner leaves both options open, whereas Nolland leans toward the latter.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ Pace France, *Matthew*, 919-28, 942. The expressions are synonymous here in the same way that they are in 24:37-44 (where even France concedes the case).

¹⁵¹ So, for example, Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 714; Pace France, *Matthew*, 925, who argues that πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς refers to the tribes of the *land* and speaks specifically of the Jews in mourning during the destruction of the temple.

¹⁵² Cf. Turner, *Matthew*, 583; Nolland, *Matthew*, 984.

The eschatological scene Jesus is describing in 24:29-31 is not unfamiliar to the disciples. Jesus alludes to the 'son of man's' role as the eschatological judge in the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (see also the parable of the Net). The parable depicts the 'son of man's' role in the harvest at 'the end of the age', where, as in 24:31, he deploys his angels for the great ingathering (13:41-3; cf. 13:49-50). An expanded scene of the final judgement also occurs appropriately at the close of Jesus' eschatological discourse (25:31-46), where the 'son of man' comes in his glory (ἐλθὼν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ), once again in the company of angels, and upon taking his throne prepares to judge the nations. It is evident that the eschatological scene Jesus is describing in 24:29-31 is the same as that described elsewhere in the Gospel.

Jesus' Response: Conclusion of Exposition – The lesson from the fig tree (24:32-36)

The lesson from the deciduous fig tree provides a concrete illustration of the exposition just offered. The fig tree's early springtime growth is an unmistakable indicator that summer is approaching. Spring, however, is not summer, the two ought not to be confused; howbeit, the onset of new leaves on the fig tree anticipates a time when in full leaf the tree will have fruit ready for the harvest. Just as the disciples discern seasonal changes by observing the growth on a fig tree, they are now required to discern the critical stages in the eschatological timetable and to respond appropriately to the troubling times leading up to and resulting in the destruction of the temple. Answering at this point the disciples' question with regard to the timing of the temple's destruction (cf. 24:3, πότε ταῦτα ἔσται;), Jesus advises them that all these things will occur (πάντα ταῦτα γένηται) within the disciples'

generation (24:34),¹⁵³ and that this will be evidence to them that his '*parousia*' is approaching, at the very gates (24:33).¹⁵⁴ Jesus stakes his prophetic reliability on the timing for the temple's demise (24:35), but concerning the exact timing of his '*parousia*' as the vindicated 'son of man', Jesus confesses ignorance – that day and hour is unknown by all except the Father (24:36). Matthew 24:36 is transitional, bridging the didactic and parenetic material in the discourse.

Jesus' Response: Exhortation (24:37-25:46)

In severing Daniel's chronological link between the desolation of the temple and the vindication of the 'son of man', Jesus' eschatological timetable anticipates an indeterminate period of time between the destruction of the temple and his final vindication at the 'end of the age'. This knowledge creates a tension for the disciples. On the one hand, the 'beginning of birth pangs' would manifest in their lifetime, and yet, on the other hand, the consummation of the kingdom although close, even immediate, would remain indeterminately in the future. How then ought they to live in the 'in-between' time?

¹⁵³ Our reading takes the referent of 'all these things' in 24:33 and 24:34 to be the events surrounding the destruction of the temple, specifically 24:15-26. It is unnecessary to insist that 'all these things' in 24:34 must include everything Jesus has spoken about above (*pace* Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 369.), for to do so would deny the argument therein, which has its aim to distinguish the destruction of the temple from the 'end of the age'.

¹⁵⁴ Either Jesus' '*parousia*' or the 'end of the age' could be the implied subject of ἔστιν (cf., γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἐπὶ θύραις, 24:33); Jesus' vindication as the enthroned 'son of man' is understood to coincide with the 'end of the age' throughout the discourse. However, the imagery 'at the gates' may evoke the idea of παρουσία as Nolland explains: "'At the gates' makes use of the imagery of arrival at a walled city. It invites the imagination of the kind of official arrival of a king or other high dignity to a city that the use of the word παρουσία in v. 3 for 'coming' conjured up" (Nolland, *Matthew*, 988).

Jesus' Response: The need for watchfulness: Three illustrations (24:37-39)

Illustrating the need for watchfulness are the examples of Noah and his generation (24:37-39) and the thief who comes in the night (24:43), which frame the further examples of the two in the field (24:40) and the two grinding meal (24:41).¹⁵⁵ The brief passage includes two exhortations that call the disciples to a state of readiness (24:42, 44). That the eschatological denouement may be spoken of variously in this short account as either “the *parousia* of the son of man” (ἡ παρουσία τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, 24:37, 39) or when “the son of man comes” (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔρχεται, 24:44, cf., 24:42, ὁ κύριος ὑμῶν ἔρχεται), strengthens our case for reading both 24:27 and 24:30 as referring to the event of the *eschaton*. In short, the expressions are synonymous throughout the discourse.

Jesus compares the ‘*parousia* of the son of man’ with the days of Noah. The Old Testament prophets and psalmists found the flood imagery a useful metaphor to describe the deliverance from imminent disaster or to depict divine punishment upon the wicked.¹⁵⁶ The dual salvation – judgement motif of the flood episode makes it a fitting illustration for the final judgement. It has served as the eschatological prototype in some pseudepigraphical writings,¹⁵⁷ but the aspect Jesus draws attention to here is the unexpectedness of the event for those who unlike Noah were unprepared. Just as life continued as per normal until the flood suddenly appeared, so it will be with the ‘*parousia* of the son of man’. The disciples, however, are not to allow the mundane to numb them to the eschatological urgency of the time. Unlike

¹⁵⁵ For Lukan parallels see Appendix Four.

¹⁵⁶ E.g., Ps 69:1-2; Ps 124:4-5; Isa 30: 27-31, 59:18-20; Jer 47:2-4. Cf. ‘Flood’, in *DBI*, 293-94.

¹⁵⁷ E.g., *I En.* 1-16; *Bib. Ant.* 3:9-10; *Adam and Eve* 49:3. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 380.

those caught by the flood in Noah's day, the disciples are to live in constant awareness of the approaching *eschaton*.

The suddenness with which the eschatological denouement will arrive (cf. 24:27) will find people going about their normal business – working in the field, grinding grain in the mill. As per the harvest in the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds the eschatological judgement involves a separation of the unrighteous from the righteous, the weeds are gathered and burned, and the wheat gathered and stored in the barn. It is ambiguous whether the one taken (παραλαμβάνω) from the field or at the mill represents the gathering of the righteous (cf. 24:31) or the unrighteous (cf. 24:39), but the point is the swiftness with which the separation at the 'end of the age' will take place. Recent commentators rightly reject the interpretation of 24:40-41 that supports a view of pre-tribulation (or mid-tribulation) rapture where the righteous are said to be taken up from the earth for a period of time (seven years or three and a half years) prior to the final judgement.¹⁵⁸ The view is entirely inconsistent with the eschatological perspective of Jesus in Matthew's performance as outlined above.

The concluding illustration of a thief breaking into a house at night,¹⁵⁹ found elsewhere in the New Testament to describe the unexpected appearance of the day of the Lord,¹⁶⁰ heightens the need for watchfulness on the part of the disciples. If there is prior knowledge of a thief's burglary attempt, a homeowner will stay up all night if necessary to catch the thief in the act. An informed homeowner will not get caught

¹⁵⁸ E.g., France, *Matthew*, 941; Turner, *Matthew*, 590.

¹⁵⁹ Lit. digging (διορύσσω) into a house (i.e., through a mud-brick wall). Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 720.

¹⁶⁰ 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; 16:15.

asleep when the thief arrives. Thus, this illustration, along with those above, emphasises the need for readiness, but none explains what this entails in practice; after all, life will continue as normal even if punctuated with significant tribulation. In the three parables that follow, Jesus takes up this aspect, exhorting his disciples to a life of faithful obedience and service.

Jesus' Response: Three examples contrasting faithful – unfaithful behaviour (24:45-25:30)

Although it is frequently assumed that the arrival of the bridegroom, in the parable of the Ten Bridesmaids, or the return of the master, in the parable of the Faithful – Unfaithful Servant and the parable of the Talents, depict the 'return' of Jesus at the 'end of the age',¹⁶¹ the assumption is unwarranted from the perspective of Matthew's plot, where, as we have observed, the 'return' motif is left unexplored. While it could be taken for granted that Matthew's audience would understand these parables from the perspective of Jesus' 'second-coming', the disciples as characterised within Matthew's narrative would not. Wright agrees; howbeit, while we argue that these parables do still anticipate the eschatological denouement, Wright insists that the referent is the destruction of the temple:

In Matthew, the other parables in chapter 25 are focussed, not on the personal return of Jesus after a long interval in which the church is left behind, but on the great judgment which is coming very soon upon Jerusalem and her current leaders, and which signals the vindication of Jesus and his people as the true Israel. There is, of course a time-lag to be undergone, but it is not the one normally imagined. It is not the gap between Jesus' going away and his personal return (the 'coming of the son of man' in the literalistic, non-Danielic sense); it is the time-lag, envisaged in Matthew 24, between the ministry of Jesus and the destruction of Jerusalem.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ E.g., Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*; Nolland, *Matthew*; Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III.

¹⁶² Wright, *JVG*, 636.

For Wright, the horizon of the “ideal hearer” of these parables is not at the beginning of the story when the master is about to leave on the journey, but at the end when the master returns.¹⁶³ Accordingly, for Wright, the parables depict YHWH’s return to Zion that catches the wicked servants / bridesmaids – Israel’s religio-political leadership – unprepared and ripe for judgement.¹⁶⁴ Thus, the parables do not function to encourage an appropriate ethic for the disciples to adopt while awaiting the ‘end of the age’, as suggested in our exegesis, rather they tell the story of how the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees have been caught napping and found wanting and are now subject to judgement, namely, the destruction of the temple.

Wright’s thesis is intriguing and accounts for the description of judgement with which each parable concludes (cf. 24:51; 25:12, 30). If the intent of the parables were to encourage faithfulness in his disciples, would it not have been more appropriate to conclude each parable with the reward for the appropriate behaviour, rather than with judgement? However, the parables include both reward and judgement (cf. 24:47; 25:10, 21, 23), which we argue illustrates the separation of people to occur at the ‘end of the age’ (cf. 13:41-43, 49-50). Besides, given that the expression “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (24:51; 25:30) occurs also in the interpretation of the parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:42) and in the parable of the Net (13:50), where the reference is clearly to the final judgment, it is more

¹⁶³ Wright, *JVG*, 637-38.

¹⁶⁴ Nolland entertains the idea that the parable of the Faithful – Unfaithful Servant may have functioned this way at first, but denies this role in its Matthean context. “The parable may originally have been a parable about the coming of the kingdom of God, with God imaged in the master of the parable. But in our Gospel use it is clearly a parable about the eschatological coming of Jesus as Lord” (Nolland, *Matthew*, 997).

probable that this is the reference in the eschatological discourse as well.¹⁶⁵

Moreover, in light of the distinction we have observed that Matthew draws between the destruction of the temple and the ‘coming of the son of man’, and in view of the fact that references to the ‘coming of the son of man’ frame these three parables (24:44 and 25:31), it seems more appropriate to read the parables with the eschatological denouement in view. In short: due to the uncertainty over the timing of the ‘end of the age’, Jesus presents these parables as a means of cultivating an appropriate ethic for disciples living in the ‘in-between time’.¹⁶⁶

Jesus’ Response: The final judgement: The sheep and the goats (25:31-46)

The eschatological discourse fittingly draws to a close¹⁶⁷ with the ‘coming of the son of man’ and the last judgement.¹⁶⁸ The material is unique to Matthew and brings to a conclusion Jesus’ response to the second part of the disciple’s question concerning the sign of Jesus’ ‘*parousia*’ and the ‘end of the age’. An end time judgement is forecast in the parables of the Wheat and the Weeds (13:24-30) and the Net (13:47-50) where there will be a separation of humanity between the righteous and the unrighteous. That separation was illustrated in the preceding three parables and now comes into particular focus in this pericope,¹⁶⁹ where all the nations¹⁷⁰ (πάντα τὰ

¹⁶⁵ Our position concurs with that of McComiskey: “The expression occurs in Matt 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28, and always describes the condition of the wicked in the future life” (T. McComiskey, ‘βρύχω’, in *NIDNTT* Vol. 2, 421).

¹⁶⁶ So also Turner, who remarks: “Eschatological correctness is ultimately a matter of ethics, not speculation” (Turner, *Matthew*, 593).

¹⁶⁷ Cf. 26:1: “Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους...”

¹⁶⁸ The universal scope (cf., πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, 25:32) and eternal consequences (cf., εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον...εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, 25:46) of the eschatological judgement referred to in this pericope render it as the most difficult passage in the eschatological discourse (Matt 24-25) to reconcile with Wright’s view that the entire discourse has the destruction of the temple as its referent. Given the challenge this passage poses to his thesis, the scant treatment of it in *JVG* is most notable.

¹⁶⁹ “Unlike the preceding parables, ...this narrative is based not on a fictitious story but on the description of a very real, though future event. Despite some clear parabolic elements, the passage

ἔθνη, 25:32) are gathered before the ‘son of man’ and judged according to their treatment of Jesus’ followers (ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων),¹⁷¹

which in actuality reflects their treatment of Jesus (...ἐμοὶ ἐποιήσατε, 25:40).

Typical for Matthew, emphasis is given to righteousness that is evidenced by deeds; the true subjects of the kingdom will demonstrate fruit accordingly (cf. Matt 5-7).¹⁷²

The judgement is final and absolute, the accursed passing into the eternal punishment (εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον) reserved for the devil and his cohorts, the righteous entering into eternal life (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).

Concluding Comments

For Matthew, Israel’s story is reaching its climax in Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Jesus is uniquely God’s son, the faithful kingdom agent through whom the vocation of Israel – the restoration of creation under God’s rule – is to be realised. The ‘son of man’ sayings feature prominently in Matthew’s performance wherein Jesus employs the expression in combination with his kingdom parables both to disclose and conceal the nature of the kingdom and his messianic mission. As such, they reflect the same ‘now – not yet’ tension evident in Jesus’ kingdom sayings. In particular, the ‘coming of the son of man’ sayings, which, as in Mark, are best understood as metaphorical, may refer either to Jesus’ vindication in

with its future tense forms is more properly categorized as an apocalyptic revelation discourse” (Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 740).

¹⁷⁰ The ‘nations’ refer to ‘all humanity’ against say ‘the people of God’ only or ‘pagans’ only. So Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 742.

¹⁷¹ For Matthew, Jesus’ ‘brothers’ are his disciples, those that do the will of the Father (12:46-50). See also Matt 10:40-42; 18:6, 10, 14 and the discussion in Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 744-45. For the argument that τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων refers universally to *all* people in need see Davies and Allison, *Matthew* Vol. III, 428-30; George Keerankeri, S.J., ‘The Gospel of Matthew: The Eschatological Discourse: Jesus as the End-time Judge’, *Vidyajyoti* 69.9 (2005): 687-97 (694-96).

¹⁷² This does not necessarily place Matthew at odds with Paul, but the two clearly emphasise different aspects of the salvation process.

the 'present' (i.e., in his resurrection and in the destruction of the temple) or his vindication in the 'future' (i.e., when he sits on his messianic throne as judge over the nations) depending upon the context of the expression.

Interestingly, just as the disciples are the sole recipients of Jesus' 'insider' kingdom teaching, so too the 'son of man' sayings that reflect the imminent and the future vindication of the 'son of man' are directed and explained only to the disciples. To the Jewish leaders, who reject the present authority of the 'son of man', Jesus offers only the sign of Jonah, and at his trial declares his ultimate vindication as YHWH's kingdom agent, but the details are not explained. In stark contrast, Jesus successfully instructs the disciples in a basic understanding of the nature of the kingdom and his role as God's kingdom agent to the point that they recognise Jesus' vocation as the 'son of man' to be that of Israel's Messiah. However, the disciples' own preoccupation with grandeur and status in the coming kingdom make them unreceptive to Jesus' passion predictions, and consequently, when they learn that the temple is about to be destroyed, they wrongly anticipate that this event will coincide with Jesus' messianic enthronement in Jerusalem. The eschatological discourse functions to correct this assumption by clarifying the relationship between the destruction of the temple and Jesus' messianic glory at the 'end of the age'.

The expository component of the eschatological discourse in Matthew's performance brings clarity and precision to the structure we considered to be implicit in Mark. As with the Markan Jesus, but even clearer now with the Matthean Jesus, the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' are carefully delineated, with the former identified with the 'beginning of birth pangs', and predicted to transpire

within the disciples' life time, and the latter assigned to the *eschaton*, to occur at a time known only to the Father. The result is an indeterminate chronological gap between the two eschatological events. Hence, the hortatory material, which is largely unique to Matthew, instructs the disciples on how to live in the 'in-between' time. Overall, however, while clearly more developed in Matthew's performance, the eschatological horizon of Jesus is consistent with that identified in Mark.

§9 The Climax of Israel's Story in Luke

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke is unique among the Synoptic Gospels in that it alone has a sequel, a second volume.¹ The “orderly account” of Jesus’ birth, early years, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension that Luke lays before Theophilus in his first volume flows seamlessly into the second volume which details the continued ministry of the ascended Lord through his Spirit-empowered apostles (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1-2, 8). Luke-Acts therefore may be seen as one single story² narrating the outworking of God’s plan of salvation to Israel and the nations through Israel’s Messiah – Jesus the Lord and saviour. As a result, a distinction is often made between the genre of Luke and that of Matthew and Mark, where the latter are thought in a number of ways to resemble ancient biography, and the expanded Luke-Acts considered to be salvation-history.

Conzelmann,³ in particular, stresses this distinction arguing that Luke writes to address what Conzelmann believes in Luke’s time was the challenging issue of the delay in the *parousia*. In response, Luke’s account minimises the apocalyptic expectation found in his primary source, Mark, and instead presents Jesus, not as the climax of salvation history, but its centre. For Conzelmann, the Lukan Jesus defuses the heightened speculation the temple plays within salvation-history. The destruction

¹ Although there have been detractors, Green is able to speak of a general consensus that affirms both a common author and the recognition “that Acts forms some sort of sequel to the Gospel of Luke” (Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 7).

² Green, *Luke*, 9.

³ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1982; German orig., 1953).

of the temple is no longer an eschatological event and harbinger of the eschatological denouement, but an event in history. The apocalyptic language surrounding the temple's demise in Mark is deliberately stripped from Luke's version of the tradition and an indefinite period of time forecast between this event and the 'coming of the son of man' (Luke 21:24). Hence, Luke effectively paves the way for understanding the birth and ongoing mission of the church as integral to the salvific purposes of God.

Conzelmann's thesis has not gone unchallenged and it is evident that he downplayed the present manifestation of the eschatological kingdom, both in the person and ministry of Jesus and in the messianic community, and has overstressed the element of delay in Jesus' teaching concerning the future consummation of the kingdom at the expense of Jesus' teaching concerning its imminence.⁴ We will engage with these points as appropriate in our discussion below. It must also be questioned if Luke's preference for non-apocalyptic language to describe the destruction of Jerusalem necessarily implies that he viewed this as a strictly historical event without any eschatological significance. Nonetheless, Conzelmann successfully draws attention to the clarification Luke's account brings to the nexus between the temple's demise and the 'coming of the son of man'. How Luke's performance develops this is the particular interest in this chapter.

Our initial discussion, however, explores the influence of Israel's story upon Luke's performance. As one commences reading Luke's prologue, it quickly becomes

⁴ So Christopher M. Tuckett, *Luke* (NTG; Sheffield: Sheffield, 1996), 48. See also John T. Carroll, *Response to the End of History: Eschatology and the Situation in Luke-Acts* (SBL Dissertation Series 92; Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1988).

apparent that Israel's sacred traditions provide the essential context for Luke-Acts and, indeed, Israel's scriptures are said to find their fulfilment within the people and events that Luke narrates.⁵ We commence our study exploring the meticulous care with which Luke situates both John and Jesus within this broader narrative, presenting them as critical eschatological figures anticipated at the denouement. Next, in order to place the eschatological discourse in Luke 21 within its narrative context, we trace the development of Luke's 'imminent judgement' theme that gains greater clarity as Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem – the city that tragically rejects God's eschatological agent for Israel's redemption is consequently itself rejected and subject to God's wrath. In Luke's performance, the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 587 BCE is evoked to allow the disaster soon to befall the city and its sanctuary to be interpreted likewise as an act of God's judgement.

The major focus of this chapter pertains to our exegetical analysis of the eschatological discourse in Luke 21, where primary interest is given to the relationship between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man'. The clear disjunction that Luke creates between the two events argues against the 'coming of the son of man' saying taking the destruction of the temple as its referent, as Wright's thesis implies.⁶ But neither is the saying likely to be referring

⁵ We agree with Carroll's assessment: "The language, style, and content of the narratives and speeches of Luke 1-2 converge to connect Luke-Acts as a whole with the story of Israel. The impression generated by these chapters is that one has been immersed in the continuing experience of God's people" (Carroll, *Response*, 49). See also Richard Bauckham, 'The Restoration of Israel in Luke-Acts' in James M. Scott (ed.), *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 435-87 (438); Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-Gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 204-6.

⁶ See §2 'The 'Coming of the Son of Man': Literal or Metaphorical?'.

to Jesus' 'return' at the *eschaton*, as is frequently assumed.⁷ Luke-Acts provides an intriguing opportunity to observe the radical reformation of the disciples' eschatological horizon, and by attending to the voice of the main narrator⁸ and the characterisation of the disciples in key passages in Luke-Acts, one gains insight into the appropriate referent of this enigmatic saying in the eschatological discourse itself.

Luke's performance of the Jesus tradition and the hermeneutic of Israel's story

The opening chapters of Luke's performance are pivotal to understanding the following events in the life of Jesus and the subsequent growth of the community he establishes. It is here that the narrator, with the aid of reliable agents,⁹ develops the historical, theological, and literary context for the story about to unfold, which centres upon fulfilment of the promises in Israel's scriptures that YHWH made to Abraham, Israel's forefather, and David, their idealised king (1:1, 32, 55, 69, 73; 2:11).¹⁰ In particular, the narrator of Luke-Acts declares the arrival of the Jewish hope of eschatological salvation – YHWH, Israel's saviour (1:47) has come to redeem his people through his Davidic agent (cf. 2:25, 38). It is within this divine drama, articulated in Israel's sacred writings, that Luke's narrator introduces the

⁷ See discussion below.

⁸ After the first person address in the prologue to the Gospel (1:1-4) to Theophilus, the narratee, the narrator slips into the background for the rest of the Gospel narrating the events that follow in the third person until the introduction of the second volume (Acts 1:1-2). In the third person, the narrator takes on the role of the reliable voice of the implied author assuming the position of an omniscient storyteller with the capacity to identify and critique the inner motives of characters. Ideologically, the narrator inhabits the story-world of Israel's scriptures and believes the promises therein have come to fulfilment in the Jesus event. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Luke: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991), 10-11; William S. Kurz, S.J., *Reading Luke-Acts: Dynamics of Biblical Narrative* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 1993), 46-7; and Robert C. Tannehill, 'The Story of Israel within the Lukan Narrative', in David P. Moessner (ed.), *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel: Luke's Narrative Claim upon Israel's Legacy* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1999), 325-39.

⁹ For the role of agents in biblical narratives see Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005; orig. pub. Sheffield, Almond, 1983), 25-30.

¹⁰ Tannehill, 'Story', 325-27.

Gospel's chief protagonist, Jesus, and his forerunner, John the Baptist, who appear on the stage of world history during "the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea..." (3:1-2).

Luke's Infancy Narrative (1:5-2:52)

Throughout the infancy narrative, the implied author employs the services of reliable characters that function as agents, alongside the narrator, to present the implied author's perspective on an individual and/or event.¹¹ These agents make a brief appearance in the narrative and together provide a collective testimony to the divine plan unfolding through the lives of John and Jesus. Their reliability is carefully affirmed in the story so that their comments are heard as being in complete concord with those of the narrator. For example, the angel Gabriel features as the divine messenger, who "stand[s] in the presence of God" (1:19) and is commissioned directly by God (1:19, 26), and it is he who subsequently endorses the young mother-to-be, Mary, declaring that she has "found favor with God" (1:30). Moreover, the high-standing character of human agents is also duly noted and receives divine sanction by means of the superintending Holy Spirit. For instance, the benedictions announced by both Elizabeth (1:42-5) and Zechariah (1:68-79), who are introduced as "descendants of Aaron", who are "righteous before God" and who live "blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord" (Luke 1:5-6), occur after they have been "filled with the Holy Spirit" (1:41, 67). By means of these corroborating witnesses, the narratee and the implied reader gain certainty concerning "the events that have been fulfilled" (1:1).

¹¹ Tannehill, 'Story', 326. Green suggests that there is no noticeable distinction between the implied author and narrator in Luke-Acts as there is between the implied reader and the named narratee, Theophilus (Green, *Luke*, 35, n. 12).

The angel Gabriel announces to Zechariah the ministry of John with language reminiscent of Malachi 4:5-6 (3:22-3 LXX; 3:23-4 MT). In Malachi, YHWH promises to send the Elijah-prophet before his own coming to prepare the people ahead of time lest when the 'day of the LORD' arrives they incur eschatological judgement rather than eschatological salvation.¹² Luke's performance invites the reader to understand John the Baptist precisely as this eschatological figure.¹³ When his tongue is finally loosed at his son's circumcision, Zechariah prophesies over John calling him "the prophet of the most high," who "will go before the Lord to prepare his ways" (1:76), a clear allusion to Malachi 3:1. Moreover, the 'coming of YHWH' is expressed in the *Benedictus* in terms of the redemption of God's people through the agency of a "mighty saviour" (lit. horn of salvation) from the house of David in fulfilment of the prophetic promises and the covenant made with Abraham (1:68-75).¹⁴ Hence, Zechariah anticipates that John's ministry lies at the dawn of Israel's eschatological salvation (1:77-79).¹⁵

¹² See above, 173-76.

¹³ So also Bauckham, 'Restoration', 439-48; David M. Miller, 'The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3', *NTS* 53 (2007): 1-16 (12); *pace* Fuller, *Restoration*, 204, 211, n. 52. For Conzelmann, "[t]he apocalyptic idea of the forerunner is eliminated" in Luke (Conzelmann, *Theology*, 101). Conzelmann has rightly been critiqued for omitting from his discussion of Luke's theology Luke's prologue where John is clearly introduced as the Elijah-prophet (cf. Carroll, *Response*, 37-38 n. 2; Conzelmann, *Theology*, 22, n. 2). Conzelmann correctly observes that Luke's performance does not include the 'coming of Elijah' pericope found in Mark and Matthew (Mark 9:11-13//Matt 17:10-13), but mistakenly takes this as evidence for Luke wishing to present John as a non-eschatological figure. Having already made the connection between John and Malachi's messenger in the prologue, Luke may have considered the 'coming of Elijah' pericope to be redundant. See also Jesus' reflection on John in the discussion below.

¹⁴ Green therefore concludes: "Luke's narrative, then, is a self-conscious continuation of the redemptive story, in which divine promises to Abraham are shown not to have escaped God's memory but indeed to be in the process of actualization in the present" (Joel B. Green, 'Narrative Criticism', in Joel B. Green (ed.), *Methods for Luke* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 74-112 (83)). See also Bauckham, 'Restoration', 448-54.

¹⁵ The 'rising of the dawn' (ἀνατολή) is a metaphor for eschatological salvation (cf. Isa 60:1; Mal 4:2), but may also connote the divine agent in this salvation, the Messiah. The LXX can use ἀνατολή to translate עֶזְרָא (branch), which is a notable messianic metaphor in the OT (e.g., Jer 23:5; Zech 3:8;

While John is introduced as the ‘prophet of the Most High’ (1:76), Jesus is introduced as the ‘son of the Most High’ (1:32). It is Gabriel also who testifies first concerning Jesus, on this occasion to the young virgin woman, Mary. The announcement concerning her impending pregnancy includes a description of her son’s vocation as David’s royal son who will receive an everlasting kingdom (1:32-3). The allusion is to the covenant YHWH made with David, that he would always have a descendant upon the throne (2 Sam 7:12-13), and gathers together around Jesus the strands of prophetic eschatological hope that YHWH’s promise to David provoked following the demise of the Davidic dynasty at the hands of the Babylonians (e.g., Ps 89; Jer 33:14ff.; Ezek 34:23-4). Moreover, the designation ‘son of God’ (1:35), a title employed in the Old Testament with respect to Israel as YHWH’s kingdom people (Exod 4:22-23; Hos 11:1, cf. Exod 19:6) and particularly to the Davidic king as Israel’s and YHWH’s representative (2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2:7; 1 Chron 28:5), is ascribed likewise to Jesus in view of his special role in the divine economy and uniquely so in view of his miraculous conception. The Holy Spirit’s role as the divine agent in the virginal conception highlights Jesus’ special status before God and anticipates Jesus’ unique vocation as YHWH’s anointed kingdom agent.¹⁶

6:12). See François Bovon, *Luke 1* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 76; Green, *Luke*, 119.

¹⁶ Within the narrative of Luke-Acts, the Spirit “coming upon” Mary foreshadows the coming of the Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost (ἐπέρχομαι, 1:35; Acts 1:8) and may recall Isaiah 32:15 (LXX) where the Spirit from on high is instrumental in restoring justice, righteousness and peace. See Green, *Luke*, 90.

The angel of the Lord, probably Gabriel once more (cf. 1:11, 19, 26),¹⁷ is the first to ascribe the title 'Messiah' to Jesus when he proclaims the saviour's birth to the shepherds (2:11). Included also in the cluster of titles ascribed to him at this point in the narrative, Jesus is declared to be 'Lord'. Elizabeth first used the designation when she greeted Mary, referring to her as "the mother of my Lord" (1:43). In Luke-Acts, the vindication of Jesus' messianic role is evidenced in his resurrection and ascension. Exalted to the right hand of the Father, Jesus is enthroned as the ruler over the nations (cf. Ps 110:1, Ps 2:8-9) and is proclaimed both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36).¹⁸ The pre-announcement of Jesus' Lordship by Elizabeth to Mary and again here by the angel of the Lord to the shepherds creates a verbal link to the Malachi passage alluded to in the *Benedictus*, thus allowing Luke's reader to understand that Jesus is the 'Lord' before whom John is a forerunner (cf. 1:76).¹⁹ YHWH visits his people through his Messiah, who is YHWH's legitimate ruler, Lord over all.

¹⁷ So Green, *Luke*, 131.

¹⁸ The significance of the dual ascription, *χριστὸς κύριος*, may be ascertained from its occurrence in the *Pss. of Sol.* 17:32. David's son "...will be a righteous king over them, taught by God. There will be no unrighteousness among them in his days, for all shall be holy, and their king shall be the Lord Messiah." Translation: R.B. Wright, 'Psalms of Solomon', in *OTP* Vol. 2, 639-70. Defending the authenticity of the ascription, Wright argues, "There are references in which *kurios* is not a translation of *yhwh* but part of a royal title; Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.), and Herod Agrippa I (a.d. 39-44) were all called *basileus kurios*, 'the lord king.' Since the adjectival use of *kurios* had as well the connotation 'legitimate,' it is not inconceivable that a group of religious and political dissidents such as the authors of the *PssSol* would have described the anticipated righteous king by that adjective with the phrase *christos kurios* and so denied the implication of legitimacy to the present, corrupt rulers" (667f., n. z).

¹⁹ So Green, *Luke*, 96, 118, 135.

John's *modus operandi* and eschatological vision (3:1-17)

John's eschatological role is to call the people to repentance in preparation for Jesus' ministry. The existing intertexture between Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3 paves the way for the narrator's further depiction of John as the Isaianic "voice of one crying out in the wilderness" (3:4ff.; cf. Isa 40:3ff.).²⁰ The extended quotation follows the Septuagint closely although in Luke, as in Mark, "make straight the paths of *our God*" (Isa 40:3c LXX), becomes "make *his* paths straight" (3:4c) allowing the reference to "Lord" in 3:4b to apply to Jesus rather than YHWH. The quotation invites the reader to reflect upon John's ministry in view of Isaiah's second-exodus motif.²¹ In second-Isaiah, YHWH acts on behalf of the exilic community for his own name's sake, initiating their redemption prior to their response to him in repentance (cf. Isa 43:22-28)²² in order to win his people back to himself (Isa 44:1-5; 49:8-12) and thus restore their witness among the nations (Isa 55:3-5, cf. 49:6).²³ In Luke, God once again initiates salvation, but now eschatological salvation is in view, with both Jew and gentile as recipients (3:6, cf. 2:32).²⁴

Luke juxtaposes Isaiah's second-exodus motif (3:46) with Malachi's Elijah-prophet (1:16-7, 76), presenting John in the wilderness calling his second-temple audience to repentance in preparation for the one to follow.²⁵ The levelling of the hills and valleys now speaks metaphorically of the people's repentance, which was to be

²⁰ For the Luke's use of the wilderness motif see Fuller, *Restoration*, 207-39.

²¹ The citation functions beyond a mere 'proof text' validating John's ministry in the wilderness, *pace* Bovon, *Luke 1*, 121. Rather, as Green observes: "In citing Isa 40:3-5, Luke is... locating John and the sequence of events of which John is a part within this redemptive-historical context" (Green, *Luke*, 171).

²² R.N. Whybray, *Second Isaiah* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 53.

²³ John Goldingay and David Payne, *Isaiah 40-55* Vol. 1 (ICC, London: T&T Clark, 2006), 53.

²⁴ For second-Isaiah, "all flesh" (πᾶσα σὰρξ) witness Israel's salvation (Isa 40:5 LXX), whereas in the Lukan context, "all flesh" participate in salvation.

²⁵ See also the discussion in §7 'The Climax of Israel's Story in Mark'.

demonstrated by an observable change in the way people lived, with particular concern for social responsibility (3:10-14).²⁶ Importantly, John anticipated eschatological judgement²⁷ rising on the horizon and rebuked his hearers for relying upon their Abrahamic lineage as means of escape (3:7-8). In a critique reserved in Matthew's performance for John's evaluation of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 3:7), John chided the crowds (3:7): "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" For the narrator, repentance was a necessary prerequisite for participation in the salvation to come and the opportunity for repentance was viewed as a crucial component of good news that John proclaimed (cf. 3:6, 18). More so for John, however, repentance was a matter of eschatological urgency, it was either 'turn' or 'burn'; the axe was already (ῥῆδη) lying at the root of unfruitful trees (3:9).²⁸

John's understanding of his own role in the eschatological timetable emerges when he denies the suggestion from the crowd that he is the Messiah. Consistent with the earlier descriptions of his role (1:17, 76; 3:4-6), John saw himself as a forerunner to the 'more powerful one' (ὁ ἰσχυρότερός) who was to come.²⁹ John does not identify the one to come as the Messiah as Luke's reader knows it to be, but his reference to untying sandal straps suggests a human is in view (3:16). He understood his own ministry, which involved the practice of water baptism for repentance, to be the

²⁶ Green, *Luke*, 164.

²⁷ "The wrath to come" (3:7) evokes the prophetic concept of the 'day of wrath' associated with the 'Day of the Lord', e.g., Zeph 1:14-5, 18. Cf. John Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20* (WBC, Vol. 35A; Dallas, TX: Word, 1989), 148.

²⁸ The felling of an unfruitful tree is a prophetic image of judgement (e.g., Isa 10:33-34) which John employs to speak of eschatological judgement. Cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50* (BECNT, 3A; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 306-08. It is thus evident that Conzelmann's thesis gives insufficient consideration to the story-world that Luke's gospel inhabits and as a result minimises the heightened eschatological flavour of John's preaching.

²⁹ So also Green, *Luke*, 180.

precursor to the ministry of this one, who would baptise in the Holy Spirit and fire (αὐτὸς ὑμᾶς βαπτίσει ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ). Whether two baptisms are in view, one in the Holy Spirit and one in fire, or one baptism with two aspects,³⁰ the illustration from the threshing floor, common also with Matthew, presents the ‘coming one’s’ ministry as both judgement and salvation. Webb has argued that the imagery depicts clearing the threshing floor once the winnowing process is complete. The winnowing shovel (τὸ πτύον) was the implement utilised to gather the separated wheat into the granary and the residual chaff to be burned (3:15-17).³¹ If this is so, then John understood his own ministry as that of the winnower separating the repentant from the unrepentant in preparation for the ‘more powerful one’ to execute eschatological salvation and eschatological judgement respectively.³²

While fire can be a metaphor for cleansing or refining (e.g., Mal 3:2), it seems more appropriate to see the reference to “unquenchable fire” (3:17) as depicting eschatological judgement (e.g., Mal 4:1).³³ This fits better with John’s preaching that warns of the “wrath to come” (3:7) and that the unfruitful tree will be “cut down and thrown into the fire” (3:9). In Malachi 4:1 (3:19 LXX, MT) the Day of the LORD is likened to an oven as far as the arrogant and evildoers are concerned, who will be

³⁰ The syntax suggests a single baptism (i.e., the single preposition ἐν modifies both nouns and ὑμᾶς is the single object, cf. James D.G. Dunn, ‘Spirit-and-Fire Baptism’, *NovT* 14 (1972): 81-92 (84)) but does not demand it (Green, *Luke*, 181-82, n. 77). Dunn assumes ὑμᾶς refers to those who have undergone John’s repentance-baptism, which leads him to reflect on how the ‘Spirit and fire baptism’ might apply to the penitent. However the narrator only refers to John’s enquirers as ‘the people’ (ὁ λαός, 3:15), i.e., those to whom the call to repentance has gone forth. Their response to John’s baptism will determine whether they experience the Spirit or the fire in the baptism to come.

³¹ Robert L. Webb, ‘The Activity of John the Baptist’s Expected Figure at the Threshing Floor (Matthew 3.12=Luke 3.17)’, *JSNT* 43 (1991): 103-111.

³² Webb, ‘Threshing Floor’, 109; Green, *Luke*, 182.

³³ In the prophetic literature, destruction by fire is a common image for judgement (e.g., Isa 29:6, 66:15-6; Ezek 38:22; Amos 7:4; Zeph 3:8) and is employed in the pseudepigrapha and DSS to describe the final judgement (e.g., *I En.* 54:6; 90:24-7; *Jub.* 36:10; *Pss. Sol.* 15:4-5; 1QS 2:8; 4:13; 1QH 14 (formerly 6):18-19). Cf. Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 322-223, n. 8.

burned leaving “neither root nor branch”. The reference to the Spirit, by way of contrast, evokes the prophetic hope for the ‘age of salvation’ where YHWH would pour his Spirit out upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32, cf. Acts 2:17-21; Isa 32:15-20; Ezek 36:24-28). John, who may have been the first to do so, assigns the bestowal of the eschatological gift of the Spirit to the ‘more powerful one’ – God’s Messiah.³⁴

Jesus’ *modus operandi* and reflection on John (4:16-30; 7:18-30; 16:16)

The narrator presents the account of Jesus’ teaching in the synagogue of his hometown Nazareth as the exemplar of Jesus’ public ministry, which commences in Galilee following his anointing by the Spirit at his baptism (3:21-2) and his testing by the devil in the wilderness (4:1-13). In rejecting the satanic temptation, Jesus, in contrast to ancient Israel, proves himself faithful to the divine endorsement at his baptism: “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (3:22).³⁵ His teaching in Nazareth is recounted first, not for chronological reasons, as the narrator’s transitional summary statement (4:14-15) and Jesus’ reference to prior ministry in Capernaum makes clear (4:23), but for its paradigmatic potential in characterising both the nature of Jesus’ ministry and the mixed response that he received.³⁶

The Isaianic reading derives predominantly from Isaiah 61:1-2 (LXX), although it includes the phrase “to let the oppressed go free” from Isaiah 58:6 (LXX), omits the

³⁴ See discussion in Dunn, ‘Spirit-and-Fire Baptism’, 88-92. The bestowal of the Spirit is linked to the Messiah in *T. Levi* 18:6-8 and *T. Judah* 24:2-3, but these may reflect later Christian interpolations.

³⁵ The divine proclamation alludes to Jesus’ status and his mission as both Messiah and servant (cf. Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1).

³⁶ Matthew and Mark’s accounts of Jesus in Nazareth occur later in their narratives and do not include his reading from Isaiah or his references to Elijah and Elisha. See Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 394-98.

reference to “healing the broken hearted” (Isa 61:1), and, by concluding with the reference to “the year of the Lord’s favor”, it omits the reference to the “day of recompense” (“day of vengeance”, MT) in Isaiah 61:2b.³⁷ Both Isaianic passages evoke the imagery of the Sabbath Year (Exod 23:10-11; Lev 25:1-7; Deut 15:1-18) and the Year of Jubilee (cf. Lev 25:8-55; 27:16-25) along with second-exodus themes from Isaiah 40-55. The concept of ‘release’ or ‘liberty’, central to both sacred observances, is depicted in the Septuagint with the term ῥῥεσις,³⁸ which becomes the link word also between the two Isaianic texts. These texts represent a reapplication of the Mosaic legislation rather than a specific call for its implementation as Jeremiah had done to his generation (cf. Jer 34:8-22). The anointed prophet in Isaiah 61 stands in the tradition of YHWH’s anointed servant in second-Isaiah (cf. Isa 42:1-4; 48:16; 49:1-6), where Judah’s specific deliverance from Babylon is in view,³⁹ however, second-exodus themes⁴⁰ are reapplied in Isaiah 56-66 with a distinct eschatological tenor so that the prophet’s announcement of “the year of the LORD’s favor” (Isa 61:2) is metaphorical language depicting Zion’s eschatological salvation.⁴¹

Following his reading from the scroll in the Nazarean synagogue, Jesus proclaims the scripture “fulfilled” in their hearing (4:18). The eschatological thrust of the Isaianic texts is not lost in their incorporation into the Lukan context; the intertexture invites

³⁷ The significance of the latter omission will be discussed presently.

³⁸ E.g., the “year of release” (ἐνιαυτὸς ῥῥεσις, Lev 25:10). Cf. R.B. Sloan, ‘Jubilee’, in *DJG*, 396-97.

³⁹ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66* (AB, New York, NY: Doubleday, 2003), 220-21.

⁴⁰ E.g., Isa 61:2 picks up the theme of ‘comfort for those who mourn’ developed in Isaiah 40-55 (Isa 40:1; 49:13; 51:3, 12, 19; 52:9). Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 31.

⁴¹ YHWH comes to Zion in power bringing eschatological judgement (Isa 59:19; 66:16) and salvation (Isa 59:20; 62:11-12) with the view to creating a new heaven and new earth (Isa 65:17-18) whereby his own glory, manifest over Zion, becomes light to the nations (Isa 60:1-3). See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 30-34.

the reader to perceive Jesus' self-understanding as the divine agent for ushering in the eschatological age.⁴² In Luke-Acts, this salvation is described primarily in terms of the "forgiveness of sins" (ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν, cf. 24:47; Acts 2:38), which for Luke, in general accord with the Jubilee motif, affects life at the personal and social level.⁴³

While the reader is aware that Jesus is *more* than an eschatological prophet – he is also the divine agent through whom eschatological salvation will come – it is his prophetic role that Jesus openly discusses with his audience and which is entertained by his hearers (cf. 4:24-27; 7:16, 39; 9:8; 19; 13:33; 24:19).⁴⁴ Paradigmatic of Jesus' prophetic ministry to Israel as a whole, the initial favour Jesus receives in his hometown quickly turns to animosity and an attempt is made on his life (4:22, 28-9). Jesus' seemingly sharp response to their initial amazement at his "gracious words" (4:22) may indicate the prophetic insight at work, by means of which, in the predictive words of Simeon, "the inner thoughts of many will be revealed" (1:5, cf. 5:21-22; 6:8; 9:46-47; 20:23; 24:38).⁴⁵ The dramatic change in their disposition toward Jesus, where "filled with rage" they attempt to take his life (possibly because they believed him to be a false prophet),⁴⁶ suggests at least that Jesus' words 'struck a nerve'. Revealed in Jesus' aphorisms and the examples of Elijah and Elisha is Israel's repeated rejection of the prophets sent to it (cf. 6:22-3; 11:47-51; 13:33-34)

⁴² So Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 410.

⁴³ Although *specific* Jubilee themes may be absent from Luke, "one can concede that the Jubilee connection does highlight the social, economic, and political impact of the arrival of the eschatological era" (David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, 'Luke', in *CNTOT*, 251-414 (290)). Cf. Green, *Luke*, 211.

⁴⁴ In Acts, Jesus is identified with the 'prophet like Moses' (Acts 3:22-23; 7:37, cf. Deut 18:18-19).

⁴⁵ So Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts: A Literary Interpretation* Vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1986), 69.

⁴⁶ Cf. Deut 13:1-11; 18:20; Green, *Luke*, 218.

and its jealousy regarding God's freedom to display his grace to whomever he wishes, particularly so when gentiles are involved.⁴⁷

Jesus' teaching in Nazareth is recalled once again in response to a query from John. Confined in Herod's prison (cf. 3:19-20), John receives a report via his disciples on Jesus' activities and in response sends two disciples (cf. Deut 19:15)⁴⁸ to Jesus to confirm whether or not Jesus is "the one to come" (7:19, cf. 3:16-17). Their arrival coincides with the conclusion of Jesus healing "many people" from a variety of ailments, enabling Jesus to send them back to John with the witness of what they have "seen and heard" (7:22). Jesus' response evokes a "symphony of Isaianic echoes"⁴⁹ (cf. Isa 26:19; 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:18; 43:8; 61:1) that speak metaphorically of YHWH's salvation in terms of the dead hearing, the blind seeing and the lame walking. The clear implication is that Jesus' healing ministry, where the blind literally receive their sight and the lame literally walk, is evidence that the 'age of salvation' has dawned.⁵⁰ The reference to the "good news" being proclaimed to "the poor" (7:22) sits in the emphatic position and functions to encapsulate Jesus' ministry as foretold at Nazareth (4:18), recalling here, as it did there, Isaiah 61:1.⁵¹ In short, Jesus advises John that he is faithfully completing the task that he was commissioned to do.

In his reflection on John's ministry to the crowds, Jesus confirms what Luke's narrative has already said about John, declaring that he is the messenger and

⁴⁷ Green, *Luke*, 218; Tannehill, *Luke-Acts* Vol. 1, 69-70.

⁴⁸ According to Deuteronomic legislation at least two witnesses were required to provide valid testimony (Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 664).

⁴⁹ Green, *Luke*, 297; cf. Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 390.

⁵⁰ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 330.

⁵¹ Green, *Luke*, 297.

forerunner spoken of by the prophet Malachi (7:27, cf. 1:76, Mal 3:1).⁵² Later, Jesus speaks of John as the eschatological figure marking the transition from the ‘age of promise’, governed by the law and the prophets, to the ‘age of fulfilment’, with the proclamation of the kingdom (16:16).⁵³ John’s unique significance (cf. “more than a prophet”, 7:26; “no one greater”, 7:28) is that he brings the old epoch to an end in anticipation of the new.⁵⁴ Yet despite John’s greatness, Jesus avers, it is even more significant to be one who participates in the ‘age of fulfilment’ and enter into the kingdom of God (7:28). The arrival of the kingdom, however, is not as John and many of the populace anticipated, and a significant component of Jesus’ teaching to his disciples is to assist them to make the paradigm shift to his eschatological vision, that is, to understand the “mysteries of the kingdom” (8:10).

Interestingly, there is no reference to judgement in Jesus’ response to John as one finds in the Isaianic texts evoked (e.g., Isa 35:5; 61:2, cf. Luke 4:18). This observation has led some to the conclusion that the omission of any reference to judgement here and earlier in his preaching at Nazareth is evidence that Jesus did not consider judgement to be part of his present ministry activity.⁵⁵ Nolland, for example, sees Jesus’ eschatological mission occurring in two stages: judgement will come (e.g., 6:24-26; 10:13-15), but in the second stage (cf. Acts 10:42; 17:31); in the

⁵² The quotation is a conflation of Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1. See discussion above on 1:76 (293, 295) and on Mark 1:2 (167-75). In the present context ‘you’ (σύ) appears to function as a collective singular pronoun for the nation as a whole. The emphasis is upon John’s role preparing (κατασκευάζω) a people for the Lord (cf. 1:17). So Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 673-74.

⁵³ Luke-Acts divides salvation-history into two epochs, the ‘age of promise’ and the ‘age of fulfilment’ (Luke 1-2; 3:1-6, 15-20; 7:18-35; 24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 2:14-36; 3:24; 10:34-43; 13:32-35). Cf. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (BECNT, 3B; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 1351.

⁵⁴ As a transition figure, “John has one foot in each era. But as a pointer of the way, he really belongs to the old era in terms of his function. He is its end” (Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1351).

⁵⁵ E.g., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke I-IX* (AB, Vol. 28; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 667-68.

first stage, the emphasis is upon God's gracious salvation.⁵⁶ Similarly, Bock suggests:

[T]he ultimate time of God's vengeance is not yet arrived in this coming of Jesus (9:51-56; 17:22-37; 21:5-37). The division of deliverance and judgment in God's plan, alluded to by the omission, is sorted out later in Luke. This omission represents part of the 'already – not yet' tension of NT eschatology.⁵⁷

It would be unwise not to attribute any significance to these omissions and to assume that the dual thrust of judgement and salvation anticipated in John's preaching was noticeable in Jesus' mission. Evidently, as John's initial query and Jesus' parting beatitude with its inherent caution (7:23) imply, there was some disparity between John's "eschatological expectations and the realities of Jesus' performance."⁵⁸ It seems that the lack of emphasis upon eschatological judgement in Jesus' ministry perplexed John, causing him to question if Jesus really was 'the one to come'.⁵⁹

However, while we agree with both Bock and Nolland that Luke emphasises the arrival of the 'age of salvation' over eschatological judgement, and with Bock that Luke's performance exhibits the 'already – not yet' eschatological tension common to the New Testament writings, we argue below that Jesus' action in the temple and pronouncement of its destruction is evidence of his messianic role as the eschatological judge over Israel. In other words, both eschatological salvation and eschatological judgement are manifest in Jesus' ministry in the 'present' ('already'), while both anticipate a fuller manifestation in the 'future' ('not yet'). Significantly, our exegesis below will demonstrate that Luke's performance portrays the

⁵⁶ Nolland, *Luke 1-9:20*, 198; 330-31.

⁵⁷ Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 411.

⁵⁸ Green, *Luke*, 295.

⁵⁹ See Bock, *Luke 1:1-9:50*, 664-65 for the various interpretative approaches to this passage.

destruction of the temple as a judicial eschatological event in history, in the same way that Luke-Acts portrays salvific eschatological events, such as Jesus' resurrection and the gift of the Holy Spirit, in the context of world history.⁶⁰

The narrative context of the eschatological discourse

Our discussion to this point has been to demonstrate how Luke situates the Jesus tradition within the broader narrative of Israel's story. At the same time we have uncovered the plot of Luke-Acts: In fulfilment of his promises in Israel's scriptures, God has visited his people through his Davidic Messiah in order to usher in the eschatological kingdom and the salvation it entails, but God's representatives, both John and Jesus, receive a mixed response, including hostile opposition to their respective missions, culminating in their deaths. Paradoxically, it is through this means that the scriptures are fulfilled (24:25-27, 44-47; Acts 3:17); everything takes place according to the foreknowledge of God (Acts 2:23), who vindicates Jesus, resurrecting him from the dead and exalting him to his right hand, thus establishing him for all time as the promised son of David, enthroned over Israel and the nations (Acts 2:24-36). Moreover, the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom is renewed to Israel (Acts 2:38-40), even to those who were complicit in Jesus' execution (Acts 3:17-21), and is likewise graciously extended to the nations, who are also to be subject to Jesus' universal lordship (Acts 10:34-36; 15:14-18).

⁶⁰ Luke's performance has not removed the eschatological elements within the Jesus tradition, *pace* Conzelmann, but rather has demonstrated that the eschatological age has encroached upon world history.

Coupled with this emphasis upon God's universal plan of redemption, however, is the theme of eschatological judgement that awaits those who persist in rejecting God's purposes, both Jew and gentile (e.g., Acts 14:5). In the discussion below we explore one aspect of this important theme as it develops in Luke's Gospel and to which the eschatological discourse functions as a climax – the imminent judgement to befall Jerusalem. Our discussion of this motif leads fittingly into our analysis of the eschatological discourse which we introduce with a brief overview of the passage.

The imminent judgement motif in Luke's Gospel

The judgement motif, although receiving less emphasis than the salvation theme, is not absent within Luke's performance. In the *Magnificat*, God has "*scattered the proud*" (1:51) and has "*brought down the powerful*" (1:52). To Jesus' parents, Simeon prophesied: "This child is destined for the *falling* and the rising of many in Israel..." (2:34), and John, as we have seen, anticipated eschatological judgement to be a significant role of the 'one to come' (3:16-17). The Lukan Jesus likewise anticipates a future judgement at the *eschaton* when the 'son of man' in all his glory will disown those who currently disown him (9:26). Ultimately, the great reversal of the present reality, as anticipated with the coming of the kingdom (cf. 6:24-26), will be only completely realised at the *eschaton*. Of interest we note that the very generation that Jesus came to proclaiming the good news will be condemned "at the judgement" (ἐν τῇ κρίσει, 11:29-32).

‘This generation’ (ἡ γενεὰ αὕτη), Jesus’ contemporaries, comes under specific critique in Luke’s performance. With language reminiscent of that employed to charge unfaithful Israel under the covenant (cf. Deut 32:5, 20), Jesus describes his generation as “evil” (11:29), “faithless and perverse” (9:41). He likens it to children who complain when they do not receive the outcome they desire (7:31-35).

Judgement awaits ‘this generation’ in particular, but not only at the *eschaton*. Jesus warns also of imminent judgement that will occur during the lifespan of ‘this generation’ for they have failed to correctly interpret the “present time” (12:56), and to recognise “the time of visitation” (ὁ καιρός τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς, 19:44). As with the generations before them, who rejected and killed the prophets that God sent to them, ‘this generation’ is likewise accused with the persecution and death of some of his commissioned prophets and apostles (9:47-49). Therefore, Jesus declares that the account of past generations will be charged to ‘this generation’ (9:50-51). The nature of this impending judgement gains greater clarity as Jesus approaches Jerusalem.

The long journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44) forms the centre of Luke’s Gospel and with repeated reminders of the destination (9:51, 53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11, 28) creates expectation for Jesus’ arrival. For Jesus’ followers, arrival at Jerusalem is filled with heightened eschatological expectation – the kingdom of God is about to be manifest (19:11)! From the disciples’ perspective, Jesus was *en route* to Jerusalem to be enthroned as Israel’s messianic king (19:35-38, cf. Zech 9:9; Ps 118:26). However, the prospect of arriving in Jerusalem involved an entirely different reality for Jesus. For the Lukan Jesus, Jerusalem is the city that kills the

prophets sent to it (13:34); Jesus is aware that his messianic vocation as the ‘son of man’ entails “great suffering” at the hands of the religious elite (9:22, 44; 18:31-33).

Luke’s narrative leaves no doubt that Jerusalem, which rejects God’s agents sent to it, is now likewise to be rejected by God. There are two occasions in Luke’s performance where Jesus laments over Jerusalem because of the judgement coming upon the city. The first Luke shares in common with Matthew (13:34-35//Matt 23:37-39). In Matthew, the lament immediately precedes his departure from the temple for the last time, while Luke places it earlier in his narrative with Jesus still *en route* to Jerusalem. In Luke, the pericope is often seen to mark the centre of Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem with Bock identifying it as the critical “turning point in the journey narrative.”⁶¹ It has reached the stage where judgement is unavoidable for recalcitrant Israel; the barren fig tree has not responded to extra manure and water; it will have to be cut down (cf. 13:6-9). The lament indicts Jerusalem, which “kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” Jerusalem represents the heart and soul of the Jewish people and thus becomes the critical target for, and potential obstacle to, cultural and religious reform.⁶² In rejecting God’s advances towards it through his agents, Jerusalem effectively scorns God’s protection, like chicks refusing the shelter of their mother’s wings (13:34).⁶³

Without divine protection, Jerusalem is now exposed. Jesus declares, “your house is left to you” (ἀφίεται ὑμῖν ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν, 13:35). Matthew’s account includes the

⁶¹ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1243.

⁶² Green, *Luke*, 537.

⁶³ The tender imagery of finding shelter under YHWH’s wings is employed frequently in the OT, particularly in the psalter. E.g., Ruth 2:12; Pss 17:8 (16:8, LXX); 36:7 (35:8, LXX; 36:8, MT); 57:1 (56:1, LXX); 61:4 (60:5, LXX; 61:5, MT); 63:7 (62:8, LXX; 63:8, MT); 91:4 (90:4, LXX).

descriptor “desolate” (ἐρημος), and in the Matthean context the saying announces God’s abandonment of the temple in anticipation of its destruction (Matt 23:38).⁶⁴ In Luke, the reference to ‘house’ may likewise speak of the temple, which God abandons to Israel (cf., ἀφίεται ὑμῖν) to become its responsibility (cf., ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν), but more likely, in the present context, ‘house’ refers to the ‘house of Israel’ – Israel is abandoned by God to fend for itself against its enemies (cf. Jer 12:7; 22:5-8).⁶⁵

The final prophetic pronouncement, “you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’” (13:35), is a self-reference in Matthew’s parallel account (Matt 23:39) and refers to Jesus’ physical absence from Jerusalem until his final vindication at the *eschaton*.⁶⁶ In Luke, however, Jesus speaks prophetically as the divine spokesperson, so that the “me” in the first clause is a reference to God, who ‘Jerusalem’ “will not see”, until it recognises, welcomes and blesses Jesus as “the one who comes in the name of the Lord.”⁶⁷ The utterance is a conditional promise;⁶⁸ Jerusalem’s salvation is dependent upon its reception of Jesus.⁶⁹ The benediction is an allusion to Psalm 118:26 (117:26, LXX), where it describes the priestly blessing upon the king as he approaches the temple to give thanks for the victories won by YHWH’s hand. There may be an echo in the Psalm from David’s restoration as king in Jerusalem following

⁶⁴ See above, 254.

⁶⁵ So Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1250; Green, *Luke*, 539; John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34* (WBC, Vol. 35B; Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 742.

⁶⁶ See above, 250-51.

⁶⁷ Robert C. Tannehill, *Luke* (ANTC; Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1996), 225.

⁶⁸ Green, *Luke*, 538.

⁶⁹ In the broader narrative of Luke-Acts, this point is abundantly clear: there is salvation in no other name than that of Jesus (Acts 4:11-12). From Luke’s perspective, Jesus is the *only* eschatological hope for the Jews, and to reject him is to reject God (e.g., 10:16) and to be uprooted from his people (3:9; 13:6-9; Acts 3:22-23, cf., Deut 18:15-19).

the revolt by his son Absalom (2 Sam 15-19); the one who was rejected (Ps 118:22) is vindicated by YHWH and established as the rightful leader. YHWH's vindication of the rejected one is an important motif within the Psalm and is deliberately evoked in Luke's performance (e.g., 20:9-19). The benediction occurs again at the conclusion of the travel narrative with Jesus' final approach to Jerusalem.

The Jewish hierarchy's opposition to Jesus has calcified by the time he eventually reaches Jerusalem.⁷⁰ Luke juxtaposes the response of Jesus' disciples, who correctly honour and bless him as Israel's victorious king (19:38; cf. Ps 118:26), with the obstinacy of the Pharisees, who demand that the disciples be silenced (19:39). The allusion to Ps 118:26 links the 'triumphal entry' with Jesus' earlier lament: whereas his disciples recognise and welcome Jesus as "the one who comes in the name of the Lord", Jerusalem does not.⁷¹ Tragically, the conditional promise is not realised and Jerusalem's fate is sealed. The 'triumphal entry' occasions Jesus' second lament over Jerusalem, which immediately precedes his prophetic action in the temple.⁷² The pericope is unique to Luke's performance, and its content – Jerusalem under judgement – stands in sharp contrast to the salvation announced at the opening of the Gospel.

⁷⁰ The religious elite respond to Jesus' prophetic teaching and action with neither the exuberant celebration of his disciples, nor with solemn repentance, but with a concerted determination to kill him (19:47; 20:19; 22:1-2).

⁷¹ So Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 355.

⁷² See above, 182-87. For a discussion of the temple motif in Luke-Acts see Ron C. Fay, 'The Narrative Function of the Temple in Luke-Acts', *TJ* 27.2 (2006): 255-270; Joel B. Green, 'The Demise of the Temple as 'Culture Center' in Luke-Acts: An Exploration of the Rending of the Temple Veil', *RB* 101.4 (1994): 495-515; N. H. Taylor, 'The Jerusalem Temple in Luke-Acts', *HTS* 60.1-2 (2004): 459-85.

Tannehill observes the verbal parallels between Jesus' second lament and the *Benedictus* that function to highlight the disparity between the hopeful expectation and the painful reality of YHWH's visitation (see Table 1).

Table 1: Verbal parallels between 1:68-79 and 19:41-44.⁷³

Hopeful expectation...	Painful reality...
<i>The Lord God of Israel has visited and redeemed his people</i> Εὐλογητὸς κύριος ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, ὅτι ἐπεσκέψατο καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ (1:68)	<i>Jerusalem has not recognised the time of their visitation</i> ...ἀνθ' ὧν οὐκ ἔγνωσ τὸν καιρὸν τῆς ἐπισκοπῆς σου (19:44)
<i>Led into the way of peace</i> ...οὐ κατευθῆναι τοὺς πόδας ἡμῶν εἰς ὁδὸν εἰρήνης (1:79)	<i>Has not recognised the way to peace</i> ...εἰ ἔγνωσ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτῃ καὶ σὺ τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην... (19:42)
<i>Provided with knowledge</i> τοῦ δοῦναι γνῶσιν σωτηρίας τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ... (1:77)	<i>Has failed to recognise / know...</i> ...εἰ ἔγνωσ... (19:42) ...οὐκ ἔγνωσ... (19:44)
<i>Delivered from enemies</i> ... ἐκ χειρὸς ἐχθρῶν ῥυσθέντας ... (1:74)	<i>Delivered over to enemies</i> ...οἱ ἐχθροί σου... ἐδωφιοῦσίν σε... (19:43-44)

On his final approach to Jerusalem, Jesus weeps⁷⁴ as he foresees the future siege and eventual collapse of the city at the hand of its enemies. The imagery evokes the language of the classical prophets describing Jerusalem under siege by the Babylonians,⁷⁵ but the present scenario is all the more tragic. The Babylonian exile transpired as a consequence of Judah's failure to keep the covenant, but in the midst of its judgement, YHWH maintained his covenantal commitment to them and promised their restoration. It is the outworking of this glorious promise that Luke

⁷³ Tannehill, *Luke*, 285.

⁷⁴ The tears Jesus weeps over Jerusalem as it faces destruction evoke those that Jeremiah cried over the city in anticipation of the Babylonian siege, e.g., Jer 9:1 (8:23 LXX, MT); 14:17. So Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 356. Tears are the appropriate response to Jerusalem's impending destruction and contrast the behaviour of the Edomites at the time of the Babylonian exile (Obad 10-14; Ps 137:7). By means of Jesus' example, "the narrator suggests to the Lukan audience the attitude that they should take toward the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70" (Tannehill, *Luke*, 284).

⁷⁵ E.g., Jer 6:6; Ezek 4:1-3. Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 356.

sees unfolding through the ministries of John and particularly Jesus. YHWH has at long last visited his people to inaugurate the promised eschatological salvation and yet disastrously Jerusalem once again has not recognised the voice of YHWH through his kingdom agents (19:44; cf. 12:56). Consequently, Jerusalem's "divine visitation will be experienced not as redemption but as judgment (cf. 10:8-15)."⁷⁶ By deliberately evoking the imagery of the Babylonian siege, Luke's performance invites the reader to equate this earlier catastrophe with the one about to transpire. Sadly, as Tannehill concludes, "What was joyfully celebrated as the fulfilment of hope in the *Benedictus*, is mourned as a tragic loss in Jesus' words over Jerusalem."⁷⁷

Our review of the 'imminent judgement' theme in Luke's travel narrative demonstrates that the impending siege of Jerusalem, which will result in the destruction of the temple, the symbol of God's abiding presence with his people, is evidence of God's eschatological judgement on the city as a consequence of its failure to recognise Jesus as God's kingdom agent. To this point in Luke's narrative, however, no space has been given to discuss the relationship of this event with the future vindication of the 'son of man'.⁷⁸ This is the role of the eschatological discourse in Luke 21, to which our discussion now proceeds.

⁷⁶ Green, *Luke*, 690-91.

⁷⁷ Tannehill, *Luke*, 285.

⁷⁸ The day of the 'son of man' receives particular attention in Jesus' teaching in Luke 17:20-37 (see Appendix Five), but there is no discussion at that point regarding the relationship between that event and the imminent destruction of the temple.

The eschatological discourse in overview

Unlike Matthew and Mark, where the eschatological discourse is directed to Jesus' disciples (Matt 24:3) or the inner circle (Mark 13:3) in isolation on the Mount of Olives, in Luke the setting is in the temple precincts in an address to his disciples but in the hearing of all the people (cf. 20:45; 21:12). This allows the discourse to conclude Jesus' public teaching in the temple (19:47; 21:37-38; 22:53), which in Luke's performance is now framed by his prophetic action (19:45-46) and his prophetic discourse (21:5-36). Jesus performs his prophetic role in public, thus making the crowds along with their leaders culpable for the travesty about to unfold (cf. 23:4-5, 13-25).

Temporal and topical markers aid in identifying the structure of the discourse. The adoration of the temple complex by an unidentified 'some' (cf. *τινων λεγόντων...*) prompts Jesus' announcement of its complete destruction (21:5-6). His prediction stirs a likewise immediate question seeking clarification regarding when these things would occur and what would be the accompanying sign (*πότε οὖν ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον...*, 21:7). In his preliminary response, Jesus cautions against being led astray (*μὴ πλανηθῇτε...*) by the claims that the *eschaton* has arrived, claims which will be made in reaction to the natural, political and astronomical disturbances that will soon transpire in conjunction with the temple's destruction (21:8-11).

The temporal marker, "But before all this occurs..." (*Πρὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων...*, 21:12), indicates the commencement of an eschatological timetable that Jesus sketches involving three distinct periods: the persecution of the disciples (21:12-19);

the destruction of the temple (21:20-24); and the ‘coming of the son of man’ (21:25-28). Whereas Matthew and Mark identify the period of persecution with the ‘birth pangs’ which will occur up until the *eschaton*, in Luke the focus is upon the persecution that the disciples will endure prior to the destruction of the temple (21:12-19). The rejection and persecution of his disciples is further testimony of Israel’s rejection of Jesus. Hence, Jerusalem’s obstinacy is clearly manifest and judgement can no longer be withheld.

The next significant temporal marker, “When you see...” (Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε..., 21:20), identifies the transition to the destruction of the temple itself and the importance of flight when the siege of the city looks imminent (21:20-24). The concluding remark of this sub-section, “...until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (...ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν, 21:24), separates this event chronologically from the ‘coming of the son of man’ (21:25-28) with an indefinite period of time. The destruction of the temple is evidently the harbinger to the *eschaton*, but is clearly distinct from that ultimate event.⁷⁹ As with the performances of Matthew and Mark, ‘The lesson from the fig tree’ (21:29-33) rounds off the didactic section of the discourse, which summarily concludes with a brief exhortation to be watchful (21:34-36). A basic outline for the discourse may be offered as follows:

⁷⁹ So also Green, *Luke*, 731.

- A. Jesus predicts the temple's destruction: Despite its outward splendour, the temple is spiritually corrupt and deserving judgement (21:5-6)
- B. The question regarding the timing of the temple's destruction and the accompanying sign (21:7)
- C. Jesus' Response (21:8-36)
 - 1. A warning against being led astray: The events about to transpire do not indicate the arrival of the *eschaton* (21:8-11)
 - 2. A three-stage eschatological timetable sketched (21:12-28)
 - a. Stage 1: A call for disciples to endure persecution for the sake of Jesus' name as continued opposition to Jesus manifests itself against his followers (21:12-19)
 - b. Stage 2: Jerusalem under siege – the sign that the temple's destruction has arrived (21:20-24)
 - c. Stage 3: The vindication of the 'son of man' at the *eschaton* and the completion of the work of redemption (21:25-28)
 - 3. An illustration from the fig tree to assist in understanding the eschatological seasons (21:29-33)
 - 4. Concluding exhortation: Be watchful (21:34-36)

The eschatological discourse: Analysis (21:5-36)

As with the previous exegetical chapters our analysis of the eschatological discourse begins with a brief overview of the Synoptic traditions, only this time in reference to Luke's performance. The ensuing detailed analysis follows the structure identified above and gives priority to those features that are unique in Luke's performance. To avoid unnecessary repetition, where issues have already been addressed in our exegesis of Mark and Matthew, references are made to these chapters. In our discussion of the 'coming of the son of man' passage, Stage 3 of the eschatological timetable (21:25-28), we give space to explore Luke's presentation of the eschatological horizon of the disciples in Luke-Acts with particular reference to the 'son of man' sayings as a means of confirming our metaphorical reading of the saying in the eschatological discourse.

The eschatological discourse in Luke and the Synoptic traditions: An overview

At the macro level, Luke's order of material is comparable to that of Mark's performance and includes the general subject matter in common with Mark except for the mention of false christs and false prophets (Mark 13:21-23; cf. Luke 17:23; see Appendix Five). At the micro level, Luke demonstrates significant verbal independence from his synoptic counterparts, which we will address as applicable in our analysis below. A striking feature regarding the eschatological material concerning the 'coming of the son of man' in Luke's performance is that a sizeable proportion of this, including teaching and parables that Luke shares in common with Matthew, apart from Mark, is located at various places within the travel narrative (cf. 12:35-48; 17:20-37; and 19:11-27). These have been included in Appendix Five for easy reference. The rhetorical effect of introducing 'coming of the son of man' teaching separately from Jesus' predictions and teaching concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple is to create already in the mind of the reader a disjunction between the two events. The eschatological discourse itself further clarifies this distinction.

Jesus predicts the temple's destruction: Despite its outward splendour, the temple is spiritually corrupt and deserving judgement (21:5-6)

The inclusio formed by the narrator's comments at 19:47 and 21:37 – "Every day he was teaching in the temple..." – suggests that the locale for Luke's eschatological discourse is within the temple precincts rather than the Mount of Olives as in Matthew and Mark.⁸⁰ The perspective of those admiring the "beautiful stones" (cf. *Ant.* 15.392; *War* 5.189) and the "gifts dedicated to God" (cf. *Ant.* 15.395; *War*

⁸⁰ So also John Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53* (WBC, Vol. 35C; Dallas, TX: Word, 1993), 983.

5.210-12; 2 Macc 3:2; 9:16) in the temple corroborates with this suggestion.⁸¹

Marshall has observed: “In Mk. the disciples are *outside* the temple and comment on its *exterior* appearance, but in Lk. *unnamed hearers inside* the temple comment on its *internal* decoration.”⁸² Likewise, Luke does not identify those who seek clarification from Jesus in response to his prediction (21:7). The address to Jesus as ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλε) is noteworthy and may imply that the question did not come from the disciples.⁸³ In Luke, the disciples more commonly address Jesus as ‘Lord’ (κύριος)⁸⁴ or ‘master’ (ἐπιστάτης),⁸⁵ but ‘teacher’ is the usual address made by someone from within the crowd or from one of Jesus’ adversaries.⁸⁶ These features indicate that Luke imagines a more public setting and a wider audience for the discourse than that found in Matthew and Mark.⁸⁷

The narrator’s earlier note in 20:45 that Jesus addressed the disciples “in the hearing of the people” probably reflects the audience for the eschatological discourse as well. That the disciples remain the primary audience is evident from the content of the discourse itself, particularly 21:12-19, where the disciples are clearly in view. It is Jesus’ disciples who will be persecuted and betrayed for the sake of his name (21:12, 16). Howbeit, the public setting in the temple and the wider audience allow the discourse to function as a final prophetic pronouncement to Jerusalem. Jesus commences his ministry in the temple with a prophetic enactment (19:45-46) and

⁸¹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 988.

⁸² I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster, 1978), 759; emphasis original.

⁸³ Pace Bock who considers the address to be a carry-over from Luke’s source, Mark 13. Cf. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1663.

⁸⁴ E.g., 5:8; 9:54; 10:17; 10:40; 11:1; 12:41; 17:5, 37; 22:33, 38, 49; 24:34.

⁸⁵ E.g., 5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49.

⁸⁶ E.g., someone within the crowd: 8:49; 9:38; 12:13; 18:18; one of Jesus’ adversaries: 7:40; 10:25; 11:45; 19:39; 20:21; 20:28; 20:39. Cf. Green, *Luke*, 734.

⁸⁷ So also Green, *Luke*, 734.

closes it with a prophetic proclamation (21:2-36). The resemblance to the practices of the classical prophets is unmistakable.⁸⁸ The opening phrase of Jesus' pronouncement, "the days will come" (ἐλεύσονται ἡμέραι) echoes the language of the ancient prophets (e.g., ἰδοὺ ἡμέραι ἔρχονται, "behold the days are coming"; Amos 4:2; Isa 39:6; Zech 14:1) and particularly that of Jeremiah (13x; e.g., 7:32), who stood in the precincts of Solomon's temple and prophesied its destruction (e.g., Jer 7, alluded to in 19:46).⁸⁹ With striking parallels, Jesus now stands in Herod's refurbished temple and publically declares that it will become a ruin.

The question regarding the timing of the temple's destruction and the accompanying sign (21:7)

Matt 24:3b	Mark 13:4	Luke 21:7b
<p>πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον τῆς σῆς παρουσίας καὶ συντελείας τοῦ αιῶνος;</p>	<p>πότε ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα συντελεῖσθαι πάντα;</p>	<p>πότε οὖν ταῦτα ἔσται καὶ τί τὸ σημεῖον ὅταν μέλλῃ ταῦτα γίνεσθαι;</p>

Jesus' prophetic announcement procures an immediate response from his hearers. Their question is in accord with that found in Mark and relates specifically to when (πότε) the temple will be destroyed and what (τί) warning signal they should look for. Their response shows no concern to relate this event to the 'end of the age' as we find in Matthew,⁹⁰ however, in similar fashion to Mark's version, out of concern that his hearers may confuse this event with the *eschaton*, Jesus discusses the two in

⁸⁸ E.g., see §4 'The Making of Israel's Story'.

⁸⁹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 988; Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 373.

⁹⁰ See above, 255.

relation to each other so as to inculcate the appropriate response in each instance (i.e., flee for safety, 21:21, or stand and look up for redemption, 21:28).

A warning against being led astray: The events about to transpire do not indicate the arrival of the *eschaton* (21:8-11)

All three synoptic accounts present Jesus' concern that his disciples, and here in Luke, his wider audience as well, are not deceived (μὴ πλανηθῆτε) into thinking that the events surrounding the destruction of the temple signal the arrival of the *eschaton*. The clear distinction between the two events is critical to all three performances, but out of the three, Luke's demarcation is the most explicit. In part, his narrative achieves this, as noted above, by separating the expanded teaching sections concerning the 'coming of the son of man' from Jesus' prophetic activity against the temple. Nonetheless, the nexus between the two events must be explained, and by means of the present discourse Luke's account achieves this aim with great clarity.

While the subject matter in 21:8-11 describes the characteristics of this age in general, in Luke's performance, they are particularly descriptive of the period surrounding the demise of the temple. The traumatic events that will soon transpire will create a breeding ground for prophetic and messianic pretenders. Jesus warns of those who will come in his name, that is, claiming his messianic office – announcing "I am he" (ἐγὼ εἰμι) – and claiming his eschatological role – proclaiming, "The time is near!" (ὁ καιρὸς ἤγγικεν).⁹¹ These must not be followed, Jesus cautions, because

⁹¹ For discussion on the rise of prophetic and messianic pretenders during the lead up to and during the first Roman-Jewish war see above, 204-5.

these events, which provoke end-time speculation, are not to be equated with the arrival of the *eschaton* (...ἀλλ' οὐκ εὐθέως τὸ τέλος, 21:9). The warning recalls his previous instruction to the disciples in Luke 17 concerning a time to come when they “will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man” but “will not see it” (17:22). On that occasion, Jesus contrasts supposed clandestine appearances of the ‘son of man’ – “‘Look there!’ or ‘Look here!’” (17:23)⁹² – which his disciples are not to pursue, with the actual day of the ‘son of man’, which will be universally recognisable as lightning lights up the sky (17:24).⁹³ In Luke 21, the disciples now hear that the events surrounding the destruction of the temple will be a significant example of such a time when false messiahs will appear.

Jesus alerts his hearers to a range of phenomena that have the potential to fuel false eschatological hope. Luke adds “plagues and...dreadful portents and great signs from heaven” to the list of impending disasters that he shares with Matthew and Mark.⁹⁴ The terms λιμοὶ καὶ λοιμοὶ (famines and plagues) “form a natural literary pair”⁹⁵ and, although these tragedies may occur independent of each other, and Jesus says will occur in various places (κατὰ τόπους), together they evoke the judgement oracles of Jeremiah and Ezekiel where ‘the sword, famine and pestilence’ appear together to depict the horrors associated with a city under siege.⁹⁶ The impending

⁹² Cf. synoptic parallels Mark 13:21 and Matt 24:23 with reference to false messiahs.

⁹³ Cf. Matt 24:27 where the saying contrasts the ‘coming of the son of man’ with the appearance of false messiahs during the period of the temple’s destruction (see above, 277-78).

⁹⁴ In Matthew and Mark, Jesus speaks of warring nations and kingdoms, earthquakes and famines. For occurrences of these in the first century see above, 268, n. 107.

⁹⁵ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 992.

⁹⁶ E.g., Jer 14:12; cf. 21:7; 24:10; Ezek 6:11; 12:16.

Roman siege of Jerusalem would impose great suffering upon the inhabitants of the city as Josephus later graphically portrayed.⁹⁷

The Lukan Jesus also warns of astronomical signs to occur – “dreadful portents and great signs from heaven” – that, again, are not evidence of the *eschaton*, but have the potential to lead people into thinking that this is the case. As such, these “great signs from heaven” (ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ σημεῖα μεγάλα, 21:11) should be seen as distinct from the “signs” in the celestial bodies to occur in 21:25 that do accompany the *eschaton*.⁹⁸ It may be that Jesus’ caution here is similar to that of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. For Jeremiah, the practice of discerning and responding to “signs from heaven” (τῶν σημείων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, Jer 10:2 LXX) is pagan and should not be a cause for dismay among the people of God. However, 2 Maccabees reports an instance where Jason misinterpreted an apparition of a “golden-clad cavalry charging through the air” (2 Macc 5:2), which was supposedly to have appeared over Jerusalem for forty days, as a favourable sign supporting his ambition to take back the high-priesthood from Menelaus by force. His aborted attempt provoked the attack on the city and the pillaging of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (2 Macc 5:11ff.).⁹⁹ Interestingly, Josephus describes a series of portents that were supposed to have occurred in the lead up to the Roman-Jewish war which he believed ought to have warned the Jews of the folly of their revolt (*War* 6.288-99). Among other things, he speaks of a vision, similar to that found in the Maccabean account, of “chariots and troops of soldiers in their armor... running about among the clouds,

⁹⁷ *War* 5.424-38, 512-18; 6.193-213.

⁹⁸ So Nolland, *Luke* 18:35-24:53, 992.

⁹⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke X-XXIV* (AB, Vol. 28A; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985), 1337.

and surrounding the cities”, and also of “a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.”¹⁰⁰ These accounts demonstrate the potential for such ‘signs’ to misinform and misdirect the aspirations of a people longing to break the yoke of their oppressors. Jesus warns his hearers against being deceived by such so-called ‘signs’ as though they were announcing the arrival of the *eschaton*.

Stage 1 of the eschatological timetable: A call for disciples to endure persecution for the sake of Jesus’ name as continued opposition to Jesus manifests itself against his followers (21:12-19)

The temporal marker, “But before all this occurs...” (Πρὸ δὲ τούτων πάντων..., 21:12), signals the transition from the general introduction with its caution against deception to the first stage of Jesus’ eschatological timetable. While his followers will engage in kingdom mission and will suffer persecution as a consequence right up until the *eschaton* itself, Jesus draws particular attention in this passage to the persecution of his disciples during the period *prior to* the destruction of the temple.¹⁰¹ Their participation in Jesus’ mission has been addressed in the commissioning of the twelve (9:1-6) and again with the commissioning of the seventy (10:1-20). On both occasions they were alerted to the potential that their kingdom message would not be welcomed. However, the full extent and nature of this opposition has not been made known until the eschatological discourse. Here the disciples learn that those who have rejected Jesus will likewise scorn his

¹⁰⁰ War 6.289, 298-99. Translation by William Whiston, *The Works of Josephus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, new updated ed., 1987; first pub. 1736). According to Whiston (742, n. d), the star and the comet may have been one and the same phenomenon.

¹⁰¹ So also Marshall, *Luke*, 766-68.

followers and persecute them with similar ferocity, even to the point of subjecting some to death (21:16, cf. 10:16).

Persecution on account of Jesus' name awaits the disciples at the hand of religious and civil authorities.¹⁰² Noticeable parallels exist between Jesus' prediction and the events narrated in Acts, which function to affirm the veracity of Jesus' prophecies. His disciples will be delivered up to local synagogues (e.g., Acts 14:1-2; cf. 2 Cor 11:24), imprisoned (e.g., Acts 5:18; 12:3-4), required to give an account before kings (e.g., Acts 25:13ff.) and governors (e.g., Acts 24:10ff.; 25:1ff.), and some will even be martyred (e.g., Acts 7:54-60; 12:2). These occasions will provide opportunity for the disciples to give testimony (ἀποβήσεται ὑμῖν εἰς μαρτύριον, 21:13), which will result in a witness to Jesus (e.g., Acts 26:1ff.),¹⁰³ and during the course of which the disciples can expect Jesus to provide impromptu wisdom, negating any need for rehearsal (21:14-15).¹⁰⁴

Resistance to Jesus' followers will polarise the Jewish people (12:51), even among close friends and within the basic social unit, the family (21:16). The disciples can expect to be betrayed even by those closest to them. However, these words are not directed to the disciples only. For the wider audience, Jesus' comments serve as a further warning of the impending judgement. In the Lukan narrative, Simeon (cf. 2:34), John (cf. 3:16-17) and particularly Jesus (cf. 12:52-53) anticipate division among the Jewish population. The priority of the kingdom message necessitates

¹⁰² Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1669.

¹⁰³ For this reading see Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1669-70; Green, *Luke*, 737.

¹⁰⁴ As Bock argues, the reference to Jesus rather than the Spirit as the source of wisdom (cf. 12:12; Mark 13:11) is not overly significant since Jesus is the Father's agent in sending the Spirit (Acts 2:32-33) (Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1671).

radical commitment to Jesus even to the point of severing societal and familial ties (cf. 9:57-62; 14:25-26).¹⁰⁵ Hence, as he had earlier informed his disciples and the crowds (cf. 12:49-53),¹⁰⁶ the net result of Jesus' ministry is not peace but division (12:51), a separation between those who accept the purposes of God transpiring through his kingdom representative and those who oppose it. In Micah 7:6, which Jesus alludes to in 12:53, such disunity between family members was, in Micah's time, further evidence of the nation's inherent corruption, thus justifying the judgement that was to come. Although Jesus saw his own baptism of suffering as taking precedence (12:50), he, like Micah before him, anticipated judgement on the horizon and expressed the desire that the fire "were already kindled" (12:49).

The reference to divisions among families and friends in the eschatological discourse (21:16) evokes this earlier saying in Luke 12, and by means of the juxtaposition of the two passages, Luke's reader is able to perceive that the polarisation of the nation eventuates through the persecution of Jesus' disciples.¹⁰⁷ In short, the nation is divided between those who align themselves with Jesus and those who oppose him and his followers. Whereas the disciples may infer from Jesus' proverbial saying concerning the hair on their head (21:18)¹⁰⁸ that their eschatological future is secure in God's redemptive plan and be encouraged to endure in the midst of the hatred against them (21:19), no such comfort extends to their oppressors. Separation is taking place so that judgement may come. The fire Jesus anticipated is about to be kindled!

¹⁰⁵ Green, *Luke*, 509.

¹⁰⁶ Green, *Luke*, 508.

¹⁰⁷ See also Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 375.

¹⁰⁸ Green, *Luke*, 737, n. 34. Cf. 1 Sam 14:45; 2 Sam 14:11; 1 Kgs 1:52. Although some of the disciples will die as a result of persecution (21:16), nothing occurs outside of the plan and purpose of God.

Stage 2 of the eschatological timetable: Jerusalem under siege – the sign that the temple's destruction has arrived (21:20-24)

In rejecting Jesus as the messianic king, Jerusalem has missed the opportunity for peace (19:42). Left to fend for themselves (13:35), the city's inhabitants will follow the lead of messianic pretenders who under false hopes and pretences march the nation headlong into war with Rome.¹⁰⁹ The temporal clause, "Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε" ("But when you see", 21:20) signals the transition to the second stage of the eschatological timetable, namely, the destruction of the temple.

Matt 24:15-16	Mark 13:14	Luke 21:20-21a
Ὅταν οὖν ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως τὸ ρηθὲν διὰ Δανιήλ τοῦ προφήτου ἐστὸς ἐν τόπῳ ἁγίῳ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,	Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως ἐστηκότα ὅπου οὐ δεῖ, ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω,	Ὅταν δὲ ἴδῃτε κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ, τότε γινώτε ὅτι ἤγγικεν ἡ ἐρήμωσις αὐτῆς.
τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,	τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη,	τότε οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ φευγέτωσαν εἰς τὰ ὄρη

Luke's language is markedly different from his Synoptic counterparts at this point in the discourse where one detects in his description of the city's "desolation"

(ἐρήμωσις) only a faint echo of the 'desolating sacrilege' (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) imagery found in Daniel as compared to Matthew and Mark. In Luke's performance it is the sight of "Jerusalem surrounded by armies" (κυκλουμένην ὑπὸ στρατοπέδων Ἱερουσαλήμ, 21:20) that provides the sign that the city and therefore also the temple is about to be destroyed (cf. 21:7). Four main proposals, which are

¹⁰⁹ See above, 204-5.

not necessarily mutually exclusive, have been suggested to account for the shift in language in Luke's account: 1) Luke writes after the events of 70 CE and thus presents the tradition in light of the historical event; 2) Luke writes before 70 CE, but rephrases the apocalyptic imagery in Mark to make it more understandable for a gentile audience; 3) Luke draws from a tradition earlier than Mark, a tradition which Mark later reinterpreted in view of the crisis under Caligula (40 CE); or 4) that Luke draws primarily from the Septuagint rather than Mark or the events of 70 CE.¹¹⁰

Consistent with the methodological approach adopted in this thesis, our concern is not so much with the 'why' of Luke's performance, but the 'what', and with an eye particularly upon Luke's engagement with Israel's story. It may be that Luke wrote after the event of 70 CE and that this encouraged a more descriptive account of Jerusalem under siege (option 1), or, that he considered the descriptive language more palatable for his audience (option 2). However, what is undeniable is that Luke evokes the siege imagery from the classical prophets, and in doing so, draws to a climax the 'imminent judgement' motif that he has been developing throughout his performance.

As our discussion to date has demonstrated, Jerusalem's fate is an important thematic strand within Luke and consequently his presentation of Jerusalem's fall is the most developed of the three Synoptic performances. Luke demonstrates a heightened interest in the 'imminent judgement' motif and his preference for the more descriptive language of Jerusalem's demise rather than the more cryptic Danielic

¹¹⁰ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1675-76; Marshall, *Luke*, 770-71.

imagery found in Matthew and Mark is further evidence of this.¹¹¹ Indeed, Luke's improvisation of the tradition brings a high degree of clarity to this aspect of Jesus' teaching. Luke's reader is already aware that the siege of the city and destruction of the temple represent divine judgement upon Jerusalem for rejecting Jesus as God's kingdom agent. To achieve this, Luke evokes the destruction of Solomon's temple by the Babylonians as the primary scriptural lens for viewing the impending destruction of Herod's refurbished temple by the Romans. Thus, Luke is consistent with his earlier reports when he portrays Jesus describing the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple with language reminiscent of siege imagery in the classical prophets.¹¹² As a consequence, Luke's performance makes redundant any need for reference to the 'desolating sacrilege' imagery found in Daniel and the crisis under Antiochus IV Epiphanes which it recalls, where the judgement motif is not so explicit.¹¹³ The net result is greater clarity with respect to Jesus' teaching concerning the destruction of the temple and the distinction of this event from the 'coming of the son of man' at the *eschaton*.¹¹⁴ The 'imminent judgement' theme reaches its zenith in the eschatological discourse with the description of Jerusalem and the temple incurring the wrath of God as the eschatological harbinger of the 'final judgement' to

¹¹¹ Luke's improvisation is not without precedence; recall the allusions to Jeremiah in Mark's account. Cf. Larry Perkins, 'The Markan Narrative's Use of the Old Greek Text of Jeremiah to Explain Israel's Obduracy', *TynB* 60.2 (2009): 217-38 (232-38); Robert S. Snow, 'Let the Reader Understand: Mark's Use of Jeremiah in Mark 13:14', *BBR* 21.4 (2011): 467-77 (476-77).

¹¹² Consider the description of Jerusalem under siege in the prophetic literature (Jer 6:6; Ezek 4:1-3) and especially the following verbal coincidences with Luke 21:20: the city surrounded (κυκλόω) in siege, Isa 29:3; 37:33; under attack by armies (στρατόπεδον), Jer 34:1(41:1 LXX); and becoming a desolation (ἐρήμωσις) Jer 25:18 (32:18 LXX); 44:6, 22 (51:6, 22 LXX) (Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1000; Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 356).

¹¹³ Cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 770-71.

¹¹⁴ Luke's account of the eschatological discourse, with its clear disjunction between the destruction of Jerusalem and the 'coming of the son of man', is thus the most challenging for Wright's thesis, which seeks to equate the two. See also Marshall's critique of Caird and Wright in I. Howard Marshall, 'Political and Eschatological Language in Luke', in Craig G. Bartholomew et al. (eds.), *Reading Luke: Interpretation, Reflection, Formation* (Scripture and Hermeneutics, Vol. 6; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), 157-77 (169-70).

occur with the ‘coming of the son of man’. However, it appears that this clarity has inadvertently come at a cost.

Our exegesis suggests that while the language in Luke’s narrative reflects prophetic rather than apocalyptic imagery as found in Matthew and Mark, *the referent and eschatological significance in each instance remain the same*. This conclusion, however, is at odds with the findings of Bock, on the one hand, who *denies the same referent* for the prophetic imagery in Luke and apocalyptic imagery in Matthew and Mark, and the findings of Conzelmann, on the other hand, who *denies the same eschatological significance* to Luke’s account that he assigns to Matthew and Mark. In short, the disjunction that Luke clarifies between the destruction of the temple and the ‘coming of the son of man’ has resulted in a *perceived* disjunction between the eschatological discourse in Luke and the eschatological discourse in Matthew and Mark.

For Bock, the ‘desolating sacrilege’ imagery in Mark and Matthew has a double referent. The primary reference is to a desolation of the temple that will occur just prior to the *eschaton*, during the period of ‘consummation’, but there is also a secondary referent, in the period of ‘fulfilment’, with the destruction of the city in 70 CE by the Romans. Chiefly because Luke’s account lacks the ‘desolating sacrilege’ imagery and because there is no reference in Luke to a period of intense tribulation “as has not been from the beginning of the world/creation”, necessitating that the Lord shorten the days so that the elect can be saved (Matt 24:21-22//Mark 13:19-20), Bock avers that the Lukan account refers only to the Roman siege, in the period of

‘fulfilment’, and thus describes it as the “first” of “two falls”. Bock offers the following reconstruction of the Synoptic traditions:

All three accounts complement one another and explain the short-term and long-term events: persecution is coming soon for Jerusalem (so Luke) and tribulation involving the desecration of the temple is coming in the end (so Matthew and Mark). ...He [Luke] wants to make clear that when Jerusalem falls the first time, it is not yet the end. Nonetheless, the two falls are related and the presence of one pictures what the ultimate siege will be like.¹¹⁵

However, our examination of the eschatological discourse in Mark and Matthew found the evidence for a double reference to be lacking within the context of each individual performance.¹¹⁶ Our exegesis demonstrated that the ‘desolating sacrilege’ imagery in Mark and Matthew was employed to depict the desecration and destruction of the temple that Jesus predicted would occur during the generation of his disciples and indeed did occur in 70 CE as a consequence of the first Roman-Jewish war. No individual Synoptic account entertains a ‘double’ desolation of the temple and in each account the eschatological function of the temple concludes with its impending destruction. Moreover, it was argued that both Mark and Matthew distinguished this event from the ‘coming of the son of man’ at the *eschaton*, in the same manner that birth pangs, although clearly related, may be separated both conceptually and chronologically from the actual delivery. Luke’s performance highlights this distinction more so, while maintaining the eschatological significance of the temple’s destruction, as our discussion to this point has argued. We are now at a place to confidently state that nowhere within the Synoptic traditions do the

¹¹⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1675, 1677. While not exclusively so, the two-fall schema is a particular feature of a dispensationalist reading of the eschatological discourse. For an example see Stanley D. Toussaint, ‘A Critique of the Preterist View of the Olivet Discourse’, *BSac* 161 (2004): 469-90.

¹¹⁶ See above, 229, 254-55, 273-74.

respective narrators or Jesus or any other character imply that the temple will have a future role within the divine economy, and that Bock's 'two fall' schema is clearly an imposition upon the eschatological horizon portrayed in these writings.¹¹⁷

Bock, however, correctly in our view, recognises the eschatological tenor of the 70 CE destruction of the temple as the forerunner of the events to transpire with the 'coming of the son of man' at the *eschaton*. The judgement about to come upon Jerusalem prefigures the 'final judgement' to come upon the entire world with the 'coming of the son of man' in the future. It is unmistakably an eschatological event that nonetheless occurs within the context of world history. It is an event that occurs in the period of 'fulfilment' that anticipates the event at the 'consummation'. In other words, even though the Synoptic Gospels vary quite markedly at times between individual performances, the eschatological perspective of Jesus is consistent across all three Synoptic accounts.

Conzelmann, for one, disagrees. In his construct of Luke's eschatology, the separation between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' is equally a separation of the historical from the eschatological. Conzelmann argues that in Luke, "eschatology is lifted out of any historical context, and is removed from all events which take place within history."¹¹⁸ Writing after the event, Luke reworks the apocalyptic language found in his Markan source into historical prose in order to assign the destruction of the temple a place in history and so to remove any

¹¹⁷ Bock may consider that there is sufficient evidence elsewhere within scripture for a 'two fall' schema, but our point is that the schema is alien to the Synoptic traditions.

¹¹⁸ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 128.

association with the *eschaton*.¹¹⁹ At first glance it appears that Conzelmann attributes eschatological significance to the genre of the language employed, so that Mark's apocalyptic imagery is strictly eschatological, without any historical significance, and Luke's descriptive language is strictly historical, with no eschatological significance. However, in Daniel, which the language in Mark recalls, the 'desolating sacrilege' imagery has both an historical referent, the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BCE, and eschatological significance, in that it is presented as an event that anticipates the *eschaton*. The same can be said of the 'desolating sacrilege' imagery in the Markan context, as Conzelmann himself is open to concede, and yet oddly he considers it irrelevant in Luke's case.¹²⁰

Conzelmann is correct to specify that "[a]ccording to Luke, Jesus himself severed the connection between Jerusalem and the End, to dispel the false notion of the disciples (cf. xix, 11),"¹²¹ but he wrongly interprets Luke's chronological distinction as a disjunction between history and eschatology. Conzelmann postulates:

The question arises why Luke, who otherwise never strips the image of the future of its realistic features, removes the apocalyptic terminology in this passage – and only here – and replaces it by a historical account. This can only be explained by relating the passage to the historical events.¹²²

However, the false disjunction between history and eschatology belongs to Conzelmann, not Luke; he has imposed his own theological construct upon Luke's narrative. Had Conzelmann given greater attention to the plot of Luke's narrative, and to the 'imminent judgement' theme which Luke develops by means of explicit

¹¹⁹ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 134-35.

¹²⁰ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 134, n.1.

¹²¹ Conzelmann, *Theology*, 134, n.1.

¹²² Conzelmann, *Theology*, 134-35.

engagement with Israel's story and particularly the descriptions of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, then he would have discovered the eschatological significance of the destruction of the temple to be unmistakable. Contrary to Conzelmann's analysis of Luke's eschatology, our study has demonstrated that eschatological nuances permeate Luke's portrait of Jerusalem and the impending judgement to befall it, and that this is most clearly seen as one explores Luke's intertexture with Israel's story. Stated otherwise, Luke's eschatology is shaped by the function the events he narrates play within the context of Israel's story, and when seen from this perspective, the destruction of the temple in Luke's performance is replete with eschatological import. Our analysis of the remainder of this passage further confirms this position.

'Days of vengeance'

Luke shares with his Synoptic counterparts the injunction for those in Judea to "flee to the mountains" (21:21//Matt 24:16//Mark 13:14). Jerusalem is no longer a safe-haven; those in the country must not seek refuge within its confines and those residing in the city should leave it to find safety elsewhere. Not only is God no longer its protector, he is the one exacting vengeance upon the city. Although the concept is common to all three Synoptic Gospels,¹²³ Luke is unique in referring to the siege as "days of vengeance" (ἡμέραι ἐκδικήσεως, 21:22), language which is steeped in Israel's covenantal traditions¹²⁴ and which must be understood in this light. In the context of YHWH's covenant with Israel, vengeance is strictly the divine prerogative since YHWH is the only covenant member capable of acting justly. On the one hand, YHWH fights on Israel's behalf, avenging his people for

¹²³ See above, 191, 261.

¹²⁴ H. G. L. Peels, 'נקם', in *NIDOTTE* Vol. 3, 154-56.

the violence and injustice enacted against them by their enemies – with respect to Israel's enemies, YHWH declares: "Vengeance is mine" (Deut 32:35). On the other hand, Israel itself may become the object of God's vengeance, should its people despise the covenant. To a hostile Israel, YHWH elsewhere announces:

I will bring the sword against you, executing vengeance for the covenant; and if you withdraw within your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into enemy hands (Lev 26:25).

While a variety of terms are utilised to express the notion of God's vengeance in the Septuagint,¹²⁵ the two passages often identified as having close verbal coincidence with the Lukan expression illustrate the case. Against Israel's adversary, Jeremiah warns the Judean captives to flee Babylon in anticipation of the "time of vengeance" to come upon the city (28:6 LXX, *καὶ ρὸς ἐκδικήσεως*),¹²⁶ and against Israel, Hosea describes the impending Assyrian exile as "days of vengeance" to come (Hos 9:7, *αἱ ἡμέραι τῆς ἐκδικήσεως*).¹²⁷ The point made at various places throughout Luke's narrative and here again in unambiguous language on the lips of Jesus is that the approaching siege of Jerusalem is to be interpreted as evidence of God's wrath coming upon the city (21:23). This "faithless and perverse generation" (9:41; cf. Deut 32:20) is in violation of the covenant and Jerusalem once again is about to fall by the sword and be scattered among the nations (21:24, cf. Deut 28:49-52, 64; Jer

¹²⁵ The MT predominately employs the *נָקָם* word group to express the concept of divine vengeance, e.g., the verbal form, *נָקַם*, and nouns *נִקְמָה* and *נִקְמָתוֹ*. The LXX variously translates these with terms such as: *ἐκδικέω* (e.g., Jer 5:9), *ἐκδίκησις* (e.g., Jer 26:10, 46:10 MT); *κρίσις* (e.g., Isa 34:8); and *ἀνταπόδοσις* (e.g., Isa 61:2).

¹²⁶ Translating *נִקְמָתוֹ הָיָה* (51:6 MT).

¹²⁷ Translating, *יְמֵי הַפִּקּוּחַ*, 'days of visitation [with view to punishment]'. See Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1001; Pao and Schnabel, 'Luke', 376.

20:4-5).¹²⁸ All this will take place, Jesus asserts, in “fulfillment of all that is written” (εἰσιν τοῦ πλησθῆναι πάντα τὰ γεγραμμένα, 21:22).

The ‘fulfilment of all that is written’

The expression τὰ γεγραμμένα (‘the things written’) occurs here and elsewhere in Luke-Acts (18:31; 24:44; Acts 13:29), not with a particular biblical text in view, but a cluster of texts with which Luke has been engaging throughout his narrative, including the intertexture just explored.¹²⁹ The entire narrative evidences purposeful interaction with Israel’s sacred tradition and the expression τὰ γεγραμμένα is an appropriate way of referring to this. For example, at the opening of the Gospel, Luke combines texts from Malachi and Isaiah with promises made to Abraham and David in order to demonstrate the fulfilment of YHWH’s long awaited return to Jerusalem through Jesus, with John, the Elijah-prophet, as his eschatological forerunner. John’s role is to prepare the people in repentance for the Lord’s coming, turning “the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents” (1:16-17, 76; cf., Mal 3:1; Isa 40:3-5), which in the Malachi context comes with a warning, “so that I [YHWH] will not come and strike the land with a curse” (Mal 4:6; 3:23 LXX; 3:24 MT). As Israel’s Messiah and saviour, Jesus commences his ministry to procure Israel’s redemption, proclaiming the good news to the poor (4:18, cf. Isa 61:1). Unfortunately, while some seemingly undeserving people respond favourably to Jesus, the cultural and religious establishment that is centred in Jerusalem rejects

¹²⁸ The Jewish-Roman war proved to be just as disastrous as the sixth-century war against Nebuchadnezzar. Josephus reports significant Jewish casualties during the course of the war as well large numbers taken captive (*War* 3.539-40; 6.271-73, 420; 7. 118, 138, 154). Cf. Nolland, *Luke* 18:35-24:53, 1002; Pao and Schnabel, ‘Luke’, 377.

¹²⁹ Cf. Joshua W. Jipp, ‘Luke’s Scriptural Suffering Messiah: A Search for Precedent, a Search for Identity’, *CBQ* 72.2 (2010): 255-74. Jipp recognises that “an amalgamation of scriptural traditions” lie behind Luke’s use of the expression in 24:44, particularly from the Psalms in this instance (257).

him, resulting in a division within the Jewish populace that manifests right down to the family unit (cf. 12:51-53; 21:16) with disastrous consequences. While Isaiah had envisioned that the “year of the LORD’s favor” would be accompanied by the “day of vengeance of our God” (Isa 61:2) upon their enemies, in Luke a tragic reversal occurs. Days of vengeance are coming, not upon their perceived enemy, but upon themselves. Malachi’s warning has gone unheeded; the Lord’s visitation finds the people in covenant rebellion, a ‘perverse generation’. Thus, instead of promised redemption, Jerusalem lies under the curse and consequently will be destroyed once again as it was by Nebuchadnezzar. Hence, it is evident that Luke views the events unfolding in his day to be intertwined with the larger narrative of which Israel’s scriptures testify, indeed, “as a fulfillment of all that is written” (21:22).

The ‘times of the Gentiles’

As with past judgements upon his people for covenantal unfaithfulness, God enlists the services of gentile nations as instruments for discipline. Assyria was YHWH’s rod against Israel (e.g., Isa 10:5, cf. 2 Kgs 17) and YHWH led the Babylonians against Judah (e.g., Hab 1:6, cf. 2 Kgs 24). Jesus predicts that Jerusalem will once again be “trampled on by the Gentiles” (πατουμένη ὑπὸ ἐθνῶν). There may be an allusion here to Zechariah 12:3 (LXX),¹³⁰ which speaks of a besieged Jerusalem (Zech 12:2) as a stone ‘trampled underfoot by all the nations’ (καταπατούμενον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, 12:3).¹³¹ However, if so, the deliverance promised in Zechariah 12:1-8, where YHWH rescues the city from its gentile adversaries through the clans of Judah

¹³⁰ So Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1002; Pao and Schnabel, ‘Luke’, 377.

¹³¹ The LXX differs substantially from the MT at this point which refers instead to Jerusalem being a heavy stone that injures those who try and lift it.

(Zech 12:6),¹³² will not be forthcoming. In a reversal of the picture in Zechariah, Jesus sees no immediate deliverance for this ‘evil generation’, rather, the city remains downtrodden “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (ἄχρι οὗ πληρωθῶσιν καιροὶ ἐθνῶν, 21:24).¹³³ We agree with Nolland that the expression most likely refers to the period at the ‘end of the age’ when the gentiles will be judged.¹³⁴ This would see a parallelism between “days of vengeance” (ἡμέραι ἐκδικήσεως, 21:22, cf. 21:8) to come upon Jerusalem and the “times of the gentiles” (καιροὶ ἐθνῶν, 21:24) at which time all the nations will be judged. The judgement coming in the near future upon Jerusalem anticipates the judgement at the ‘end of the age.’

For Bock, however, the expression implies a future role for Jerusalem – the city will not be downtrodden forever; but at the ‘return’ of Christ will be restored once again.¹³⁵ Significantly, this creates for Bock an intervening period within the salvific plan of God that is marked by Jesus’ first and second coming and during which gentiles are the main focus of the divine activity. The result is a periodisation of salvation history within which there is a present focus upon the gentiles and a future

¹³² “The imagery in Zech. 12:2-3 reflects a postexilic understanding of the Zion tradition, namely, that Jerusalem will shake, will be lifted, but that, finally, Yahweh will assist his city during military encounter” (David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi* (OTL; Louisville, KY: WJK, 1995), 14). Cf. Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC, Vol. 32; Waco, TX: Word, 1984), 275.

¹³³ The notion of ‘reversal’ is not uncommon in Israel’s scriptural tradition since many of the divine promises are contingent upon Israel’s faithfulness to the covenant.

¹³⁴ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1002-3; *idem*, “The Times of the Nations’ and a Prophetic Pattern in Luke 21’, in Thomas R. Hatina (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation in Early Christian Gospels* Vol. 3: The Gospel of Luke (SSEJC, Vol. 16; London: T&T Clark, 2010), 133-147. The expression has at times been subject to quite incredible interpretations, e.g., John T. Baldwin, ‘Reimarus and the Return of Christ Revisited: Reflections on Luke 21:24b and Its Phrase “Times of the Gentiles” in Historicist Perspective’, *JATS* 11.1-2 (2000): 295-306. Baldwin understands the expression to refer to a period of time that “extends for thirteen centuries, beginning sometime after the collapse of Imperial Rome” (304).

¹³⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1680-81. Conversely, Taylor argues that one of Luke’s aims was to avert any expectations among Jewish Christians for Jerusalem’s restoration (cf. Taylor, ‘Jerusalem Temple’, 482).

focus upon the Jews.¹³⁶ However, this is a significant amount of theological weight to rest upon a single phrase and it appears that a dispensationalist's eschatology is guiding Bock's exegesis at this point. One searches in vain for such an eschatological division between Jew and gentile in Luke-Acts. Rather, one finds Luke's concern to demonstrate the incorporation of gentile converts into the Jewish movement known as 'the way' (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22, cf. Acts 10-11, 15). The only marked divide that Luke emphasises is between those of Jewish and gentile origins who accept and propagate Jesus' kingdom message and those of Jewish and gentile origin who reject and obstruct it, that is, between believers and non-believers.

The question for Bock is: Where in Luke-Acts does the kingdom message cease to have the Jewish people as its primary missionary target? Gentile mission commences long before the destruction of the temple and is consistently presented as subsequent to the ministry to the Jews. Even at the conclusion of Acts, sometimes touted as the final 'turn' to the gentiles, no such divide is evident. Rather, as is his practice wherever there is a Jewish community in the city (e.g., Acts 17:1-2), on reaching Rome, Paul first proclaims the kingdom message to his Jewish compatriots (Acts 28:17), some of whom believe while others refuse (Acts 28:24). Only once his Jewish audience has heard the message does Paul turn to the gentiles and in doing so indicts the unbelieving Jews based upon the prophetic testimony (cf. Isa 6:9-10). But as the previous two 'turning' passages indicate (cf. Acts 13:46; 18:6), the 'turn' to

¹³⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1681-82. Bock suggests the term *καιροί* ("times") may be a technical term in Luke-Acts to describe this periodisation.

the gentiles is never absolute, nor does it exclude ongoing ministry to the Jews (cf. Acts 18:5-18).¹³⁷

However, while Luke records large numbers of Jews committing themselves to Jesus as their Lord and Messiah,¹³⁸ that many Jews rejected the kingdom message is evidently an issue for Luke. In our view, Nolland rightly assesses the situation in Acts: “The Jews, by and large, may have given up on Christianity, but Luke knows nothing of Christianity having given up on the Jews.”¹³⁹ Indeed, Peter anticipates the fulfilment of the prophetic promises for “universal restoration” (Acts 3:21) and not just because God returns his focus upon the Jew at the *eschaton* as Bock supposes. Rather, Peter exhorts his fellow country folk to return to God in repentance and experience the forgiveness of sins in the present time, “so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:20).¹⁴⁰ In short, it is difficult to substantiate Bock’s periodisation of salvation history within the eschatological horizon of Luke-Acts, and especially within the eschatological teaching ascribed to Jesus in the first volume.

The point of legitimate concern for Bock is the future of Jerusalem in the purposes of God, by which he appears to infer the future of the Jewish people. Do the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple signal the end of the Jewish people in the purposes of God? The question is frequently asked in New Testament scholarship,

¹³⁷ John Nolland, ‘Salvation-History and Eschatology’, in I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (eds.), *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 63-81.

¹³⁸ E.g., Acts 2:41; 4:4; 21:20, including priests (Acts 6:7) and Pharisees (Acts 15:5; 26:5).

¹³⁹ Nolland, ‘Salvation-History’, 81.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (BSL; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 132-35.

but is in reality nonsensical in the Lukan context.¹⁴¹ As our present discussion has clearly demonstrated, Luke goes to great lengths to demonstrate the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel through Jesus the Davidic son, who, as the descendant of the archetypal king of Judah, is both ethnically and biblically the defining individual of what it is to be Jewish. In Luke's performance, Jesus demonstrates above all others what it is to be loyal to the covenant, the faithful Jew whom YHWH commissions and vindicates as his kingdom agent. Hence, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple not only depicts God's judgement upon this 'evil generation' (11:29), but also vindicates Jesus' leadership over that of the religio-political system of governance that led the people into covenantal violation. It is this hierarchical system, including the temple and its cultus, which is the particular target under judgement, and Luke's performance gives no indication that it will ever be resurrected in the future. Indeed, Israel is reconstituted around Jesus, its authentic leader, who inaugurates the promised new covenant (cf. Jer 31:31-34, 38:31-34 LXX) with his faithful followers (22:20) and confers on them a kingdom with both representative and judicial roles with respect to Israel (22:28-30).¹⁴² In short, Luke-Acts presents Jesus, and Jesus alone (Acts 4:12, cf. Acts 3:23), as the Jews' eschatological hope and this never ceases to be the case (Acts 3:19-21).

It is evident, therefore, that rather than representing a gentile-focussed period within salvation history, the notion of the 'times of the gentiles' reflects a pattern repeated

¹⁴¹ At its heart, the issue is both christological and hermeneutical. For example, those who correctly stress the *particularity* of the incarnation and accordingly affirm the significance of Jesus' descent from David for Luke's claim that Jesus fulfils the promises made to Israel's ancestors will find quite puzzling the positions of those that deny any eschatological future for Israel or those that make Israel's future distinct from that of the gentiles. For Luke, the present and future hope of both Jew and gentile *without distinction* (cf. Acts 10: 34-35) is the vindication of Jesus as Israel's Lord and Messiah.

¹⁴² For the significance of the 'Twelve' in Luke-Acts see Fuller, *Restoration*, 239-64.

throughout the Old Testament where the pagan nation recruited as YHWH's instrument to execute judgement upon Israel is likewise subject to judgement once its own time has arrived.¹⁴³ Thus Nahum, for example, announces YHWH's vengeance against Assyria (Nah 1:2; 3:1-7, 18), and Jeremiah declares the same fate for Babylon (Jer 50:17-18, 27:17-18 LXX; 51:6, 28:6 LXX). In Luke's performance, the destruction of Jerusalem foreshadows the final judgement of all nations at the *eschaton*. As with his Synoptic counterparts, the period from the destruction of the temple until the *eschaton* is indeterminate. Moreover, while the Lukan Jesus makes no reference to the 'desolating sacrilege', it is possible that his reference to the 'times of the Gentiles' is intended to echo the period of 'the end' in Daniel (cf. Dan 12:1-3), particularly so since the discourse transitions to the unmistakable Danielic image – the 'coming of the son of man'.

Stage 3 of the eschatological timetable: The vindication of the 'son of man' at the *eschaton* and the completion of the work of redemption (21:25-28)

The destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' are separated chronologically by an indeterminate period of time (cf. ἄχρι, 21:24), but eschatologically, the two are inseparably linked, with the former prefiguring the latter.¹⁴⁴ Judgement comes upon faithless Israel in the present, but in the future judgement will come upon all who are unprepared for the 'coming of the son of man'. During the intervening period the kingdom message is to be proclaimed to both Jew and gentile, commencing in Jerusalem and spreading from there into all the nations (24:47). For those who refuse to repent and believe the kingdom message,

¹⁴³ Cf. John Nolland, 'Times of the Nations', 134.

¹⁴⁴ So also Jan Lambrecht, 'Naherwartung in Luke? A Note on M. Wolter's Explanation of Luke 21', *ETL* 87.4 (2011): 425-431 (428).

the eschatological denouement will be fearful (21:26), but for those “destined for eternal life” (Acts 13:48), the ‘coming of the son of man’ signals the culmination of their redemption (21:28).

The ‘cosmic signs’ spoken of in 21:25 ought not to be confused with the “dreadful portents and great signs from heaven” in 21:11.¹⁴⁵ The portents referred to earlier relate to the perceived astronomical phenomena that some will misinterpret as indicating the arrival of the *eschaton*, whereas the ‘cosmic signs’ in 21:25 are those that accompany the *eschaton*. The ‘cosmic signs’ are not warning signs; rather, they appear concurrently with the ‘coming of the son of man’.¹⁴⁶ This reading sits better with Jesus’ previous warning to his disciples that the revelation of the ‘son of man’ (17:30) will be sudden, like lightning flashing across the heaven (17:24). It will be like the “days of Noah” (17:26-27) and the “days of Lot” (17:28-30); life will have the appearance of normalcy, but without warning the judgement will come. Thus, the ‘coming of the son of man’ will be “at an unexpected hour” (12:40). Although these ‘cosmic signs’ are uniquely presented in Luke’s performance¹⁴⁷ the language is clearly akin to the ‘un-creation’ imagery employed in the judgement oracles of the classical prophets and evoked with eschatological intent in Mark and Matthew.¹⁴⁸

The ‘un-creation’ motif is further enhanced in Luke by the reference to “the roaring of the sea and the waves” which echoes past judgements by water (Gen 7; Exod 15; cf. Gen 1:2). Luke’s performance is alone also in depicting the anxiety of the unrepentant as the creational distinctions unravel about them. “The picture is of

¹⁴⁵ Pace Green, *Luke*, 740.

¹⁴⁶ See above, 207-12, 278-79.

¹⁴⁷ E.g., in Matthew and Mark there is a description of the astral activity, e.g., the sun is “darkened”, but in Luke the signs are unspecified.

¹⁴⁸ E.g., Isa 13:10; 34; Joel 2:28-32 (see above, 207-12, 278-79).

people anticipating in terror the unleashing of the destructive forces of chaos.”¹⁴⁹

The nations, who once trampled Jerusalem under foot, are now in great distress and fear – the ‘times of the gentiles’ have arrived.

The ‘coming of the son of man’ signals both judgement and redemption. Those under judgement will see the ultimate vindication of the ‘son of man’, which announces the arrival of redemption for Jesus’ followers.¹⁵⁰ The ‘son of man’ imagery evokes Dan 7:13-14 where the human-like figure ascends to the heavenly court and is vindicated by the Ancient One. We have argued in our exegesis of the Markan and Matthean versions of the saying that the language ought to be understood metaphorically, as it functions in Daniel itself, and it is our conviction that the imagery functions in a similar fashion in the Lukan context.¹⁵¹ In other words, “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” in 21:27 is not a specific reference to Jesus’ ‘second-coming’ or ‘return’; at least, Luke’s performance implies that neither Jesus’ disciples nor the wider audience would have understood it this way. Rather, it is metaphorical language depicting the vindication of the ‘son of man’ at the *eschaton*. This position becomes sufficiently clear as one examines Luke’s presentation of the eschatological horizon of the disciples in Luke-Acts with particular reference to the ‘son of man’ sayings. Importantly, Luke documents a dramatic paradigm shift in the disciples’ eschatological perspective as a consequence of their witnessing Jesus’ ascension that facilitates a remarkable hermeneutical

¹⁴⁹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1005.

¹⁵⁰ The people/nations terrorised by the signs about them (21:25-26) are the most probable subject of ὁψονται in 21:27.

¹⁵¹ See above, 213-26, 281-82.

development in the disciples' understanding of the 'son of man' sayings. We trace this development in the discussion below.

Luke's presentation of the eschatological perspective of the disciples with particular reference to the 'son of man' sayings.

There are twenty-five 'son of man' sayings in Luke's Gospel and one in Acts (see Appendix Six). As with Matthew and Mark, these sayings serve within Luke-Acts to define and clarify the messianic vocation of Jesus. There are some interesting features that emerge however, when one compares the recipient/s of the respective sayings in Luke with those in Matthew's performance (cf. Appendix Three). In Matthew, the Jewish authorities are the recipients of Jesus' 'son of man' sayings on six occasions, while in Luke this occurs only three times. Strikingly, whereas in Matthew, the crowds were the explicit audience on only one occasion, in Luke, in addition to the two occasions where they are the explicit target of Jesus' address (including the sign of Jonah saying!), there are clearly another three, but possibly up to six, occasions where Luke has the crowds in the background presumably listening in on Jesus' teaching, such as in the case of the eschatological discourse. This has the rhetorical effect of highlighting the culpability of the crowds along with the religious hierarchy; the entire populace is represented in this 'evil generation' (11:29). Most importantly, however, Luke-Acts is unique in ascribing on two separate occasions the 'son of man' expression to the lips of someone other than Jesus himself. The first appears in Luke 24:7, where the two angels (cf. 24:23) exhort the women at the empty tomb to remember Jesus' earlier predictions

concerning the death and resurrection of the 'son of man'.¹⁵² The second occasion occurs in Luke's second volume on the lips of Stephen at his martyrdom (Acts 7:56). The single saying in Acts is significant for it provides crucial insight into the revised eschatological perspective of the early Christian community.

Interestingly, Luke's characterisation of the disciples traces the transformation of their eschatological perspective.¹⁵³ In his first volume, the grand narrative unfolding before the disciples' eyes foresaw: Jesus' imminent enthronement in Jerusalem as Israel's Davidic king (19:38); the immediate establishment of the kingdom of God (19:11); and, their own elevation to positions of great importance (22:24). Even though Jesus forewarns his disciples, the narrator remarks that his passion predictions were divinely concealed from them (cf. 9:45; 18:34); the disciples demonstrate no cognizance of either Jesus' impending death or resurrection until the events themselves overwhelm them.¹⁵⁴ Cleopas voices the crushing blow Jesus' crucifixion dealt their eschatological hope: "...we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel" (24:21). Only after the resurrected Jesus explains to his disciples the necessity of his death and resurrection through recourse to Israel's sacred traditions do they begin to comprehend (24:25-27, 44-47), and yet, so entrenched are they in their way of thinking that hopes along the same lines quickly emerge following the resurrection.

¹⁵² The angels function as agents for the narrator to provide divine affirmation of Jesus' previous predictions and thus confirm Jesus' perception of his messianic role in terms of the 'son of man'. See note 9 above.

¹⁵³ For a reflection on the eschatological perspective of Luke's readers see Lambrecht, '*Naherwartung*'.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Joel B. Green, 'Learning Theological Interpretation from Luke' in Bartholomew et al., *Reading Luke*, 55-78 (69-70).

In Acts 1:6, the disciples ask the resurrected Jesus: “Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” Fitzmyer suggests the following reasoning:

Since Jesus did not wrest governance of Judea from the Romans during his earthly ministry, it was a natural or logical question for his followers to put to him as the risen Lord. ... Though the disciples who pose the question are Christians, they still speak as Judean Jews on behalf of ‘Israel.’¹⁵⁵

Thus, in his characterisation of the disciples up to this point of the Luke-Acts narrative, Luke presents the disciples as holding a consistent eschatological perspective, but one more akin with the eschatological perspectives of late second-temple Judaism than the distinctive Christian eschatology evident in the preaching of the post-Pentecost messianic community.

What is the catalyst for the major transformation that takes place in the disciples’ eschatological perspective? According to the narrative of Acts, the eschatology of the fledgling messianic community is radically altered as a result of witnessing Jesus’ physical ascent¹⁵⁶ into heaven in a cloud¹⁵⁷ and receiving angelic testimony that Jesus would one day return in the same manner that he left (Acts 1:9-11).

Consequently, the disciples become witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection *and* ascension and it is these two critical events that shape the disciples’ post-Pentecost preaching.¹⁵⁸ According to Luke’s performance, it is their witness of the ascension

¹⁵⁵ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB; New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 205. Cf. I. Howard Marshall, *Acts* (TNTC; Leicester: IVP, 1980), 60.

¹⁵⁶ “Luke stresses the visible perception of Christ’s leave-taking. Five different verbs emphasize that: ‘as they were looking on,’ ‘out of their sight’ (v 9); ‘staring’ (v 10); ‘looking,’ and ‘saw’ (v.11). Thus the apostles become eyewitnesses of Christ’s exaltation” (Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 208-9).

¹⁵⁷ “The cloud is at one and the same time the vehicle which envelops Jesus and transports him away, and the sign of the heavenly glory of God (cf. Lk. 9:34f.; Rev. 11:12). It is thus a supernatural and symbolic cloud” (Marshall, *Acts*, 61).

¹⁵⁸ So also Marshall, *Acts*, 62.

in particular that profoundly transforms their eschatological horizon. This new perspective is evident in the only ‘son of man’ saying in Luke’s second volume.

In Acts 7:55-56, Stephen receives a vision of the ascended Jesus and declares to those who are about to stone him that he sees “the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”¹⁵⁹ Although Jesus was despised by Israel’s leadership, God has vindicated him and endorsed his messianic vocation by exalting him to his heavenly abode. Heaven has received what Jerusalem rejected; God has exalted the suffering ‘son of man’. This Spirit-authenticated vision (cf. “filled with the Spirit”, Acts 7:55), verifies Peter’s earlier Spirit-filled preaching on the day of Pentecost, where he testifies to Jesus’ exaltation in terms of his resurrection, ascension and reign as Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:32-36). Jesus’ exaltation, therefore, provides the impetus for Christian mission and is the catalyst for the disciples’ renewed vision. As God’s vindicated kingdom agent, Jesus exerts his authority upon the earth in the present time through the dynamic of his Spirit-infused followers, and, at a divinely appointed time in the future, he will return to earth to consummate his messianic function. Jesus “must remain in heaven”, Peter later proclaims in a sermon in Solomon’s Portico, “until the time of universal restoration” (Acts 3:21).¹⁶⁰ Hence, a distinctly Christian eschatology is born. The glory of the ‘son of man’, while awaiting consummation in the future, is realised in the present

¹⁵⁹ The significance of Jesus standing rather than sitting in Stephen’s vision (cf. Ps 110:1; Luke 22:69) has been variously understood (see, for example, C.K. Barrett, *Acts* Vol. I (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 384-85; Darrell L. Bock, *Acts* (BECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 311-12). After surveying various proposals, Bock concludes: “[T]he picture of Jesus as vindicating judge is the most likely force of the image here” (312).

¹⁶⁰ The expression ἄχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσεως πάντων likely refers to “the process that goes on until the return of Jesus rather than the completion of the process” (I. Howard Marshall, ‘Acts’, in *CNTOT*, 513-606 (547)). Cf. Bauckham, ‘Restoration’, 479-80; Hans F. Bayer, ‘Christ-Centered Eschatology in Acts 3:17-26’ in Joel B. Green and Max Turner (eds.), *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 236-50 (247-48); Pao, *Acts*, 132-35.

with Jesus' ascension into heaven. Thus, Luke-Acts is unique in that it traces the development of the disciples' eschatological paradigm shift, which occurs post-resurrection and as a consequence of Jesus' ascension.

The ascension is clearly a significant theme in Luke-Acts and even though the significant development occurs in volume two, the narrator subtly introduces the theme to his readers in his first volume. In Luke's performance, the report of the transfiguration resonates with new implications. The cloud, which is a common Old Testament image for divine glory (e.g., Exod 19:16; 40:34) and that shrouds the group on the mountain, now prefigures the cloud that is to envelop Jesus at his ascension (Acts 1:9). Moreover, in Luke's account, Moses and Elijah speak with Jesus about "his exodus" (τὴν ἑξοδὸν αὐτοῦ, 9:31) to occur at Jerusalem, which, in the context of Luke-Acts, alludes to his death, resurrection and ascension.¹⁶¹ The reference to Jerusalem anticipates Jesus' journey to the city which commences in 9:51 with the narrator's editorial comment: "When the days drew near for him to be taken up [ἀνάλημις], he set his face to go to Jerusalem." The term ἀνάλημις implies "Jesus' pathway through death to exaltation."¹⁶² Together these signals prime Luke's reader for the preliminary account of Jesus' ascension that the narrator provides at the conclusion of the first volume (24:50-53).

¹⁶¹ So Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 499-500. There is no indication in the narrative, however, that the disciples comprehend the significance of the event. Indeed, the narrator dismisses Peter's suggestion to build tabernacles on the mount advising the reader that Peter did not know what he was saying (9:33).

¹⁶² Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, 535.

Importantly, we should note that the Lukan Jesus never alludes to his ascension in his teaching; the concept is developed solely through the narrator.¹⁶³ It might be argued that Jesus' response to the Sanhedrin at his trial – "...from now on the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God" (22:69) – is an exception, particularly so since Jesus' words are later evoked by Stephen (Acts 7:55-56). Jesus' testimony at his trial unmistakably foreshadows Stephen's later declaration which, among other things, proves Jesus' earlier statement to be true. However, whereas the language in Acts 7 is clearly literal, and functions there to witness to Jesus' ascension, in the context of his trial in Luke 22 Jesus' allusion to Ps. 110:1 would conjure no such connotation in the minds of the Sanhedrin. It would rather have been heard as a claim to be God's anointed kingdom agent, as their follow-up question ("Are you, then, the Son of God?", 22:70, cf. Ps 2:7) and report to Pilate (he says "he himself is Messiah, a king") confirm. While Jesus' language at his trial may carry an intended double meaning, particularly in view of the events to transpire later in the Luke-Acts narrative, the metaphorical is the only meaning his inquisitors could have ever been expected to discern.¹⁶⁴

The above overview suggests that it is highly improbable that Luke intends his readers to assume that the disciples would have heard the 'coming of the son of man' saying in the eschatological discourse as a reference to his 'return' at the *eschaton*. To do so would create an untenable incongruity within the narrative. Rather, the

¹⁶³ Cf. John's Gospel, where Jesus discusses the topic at length with his disciples in the final discourse.

¹⁶⁴ See Green, *Luke*, 796 and the discussion of the parallel accounts in Mark (216-18) and Matthew (244-45).

evidence is consistent: the pre-ascension, pre-Pentecost eschatological horizon of the disciples entertained no concept of Jesus' ascension and subsequent 'return'.¹⁶⁵

Given Luke's consistent presentation of the disciples' eschatological viewpoint, it behoves his interpreter to read the 'son of man' sayings accordingly. Thus, while some might suggest that Jesus teaches about his 'return', but his disciples have no understanding of the referent, it is striking that elsewhere the narrator comments when this is so, significantly, with respect to the suffering of the 'son of man' as noted above. However, the narrator at no point indicates that the disciples failed to comprehend the 'coming of the son of man' sayings, and if anything, the converse is true. When Jesus concludes the parables of the Watchful Slave and the Thief in the Night with the injunction: "You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour" (12:40), Peter asks, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" The issue was not *what* Jesus had said, but *to whom* did it apply. Likewise, in Jesus' extended teaching on the 'day/s of the son of man' in Luke 17 (see Appendices Five and Six) the disciples do not seek clarification about *what* Jesus is saying, they just want to know *where* this will take place (17:37). It appears that the 'coming of the son of man', 'day/s of the son of man' concept was not puzzling in itself to the disciples according to Luke's performance.

How is this so? Evidently, the 'son of man' sayings were sufficiently comprehensible within their earlier eschatological horizon, that is, for the disciples the language was not initially understood as a literal description of Jesus' descent

¹⁶⁵ It is notable that the term *parousia*, which can function as a technical term in the NT for Jesus' 'return' at the *eschaton*, occurs nowhere in Luke-Acts, and that the concept is not even introduced into the narrative until volume two.

from heaven to earth at the *eschaton*, but rather as metaphorical language depicting Jesus' vindication at the *eschaton*. Luke's performance suggests that the disciples understood the Danielic imagery as metaphor up until Jesus' ascension, after which a literal reading emerged that reversed the direction of travel found in the Danielic context so that the vindicated 'son of man' *returns* to earth in all his glory at the *eschaton*. In other words, Luke's performance charts the hermeneutical shift from a metaphorical to a literal reading of Daniel 7, a shift that occurs according to Luke as a consequence of Jesus' ascension and that paves the way for expressing the re-envisioned eschatological perspective of the early Christian community.

The combined narrative of Luke-Acts evidences the phenomenon of a metaphorical use of an expression foreshadowing a literal understanding, in a manner similar to the development of the Jewish belief in the physical resurrection.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, we recall from the outset of this thesis that Allison challenged Wright to explain how the language Wright believed Jesus used consistently in reference to the destruction of the temple could be subsequently employed by the early church to speak of Jesus' 'return' at the *eschaton*.¹⁶⁷ Our modification of Wright's thesis, we suggest, answers that challenge while at the same time being faithful to both the context of Israel's story and the narrative integrity of Luke-Acts. In reflection, the views of both Allison and Wright are inadequate.

The metaphorical and literal understandings of the 'coming of the son of man' saying as explained in our exegesis are not mutually exclusive – Jesus' vindication at the

¹⁶⁶ See above, 7-8.

¹⁶⁷ See above, 22-5.

eschaton is common to both readings – however, an interpretative approach that respects the narrative integrity of Luke’s performance will resist reading the eschatological perspective of the post-Pentecost community back into the earlier ‘coming of the son of man’ sayings in the Gospel. In short, Jesus’ teaching concerning the future vindication of the ‘son of man’ in Luke’s Gospel does not assume his ascension and subsequent ‘return’. Once this is recognised, a greater degree of clarity emerges concerning the eschatology in Luke-Acts.

It should now be apparent, that when Jesus announces the “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” (21:27) during the eschatological discourse, the referent in view is not Jesus’ ‘return’, but his vindication at the *eschaton*, where the ‘son of man’ is revealed in his glory as the agent for eschatological judgement and eschatological redemption. Because Luke provides a public setting in the temple for Jesus’ discourse, the potential for this event to be one of redemption is extended to all of his hearers. Only at the *eschaton* itself, which will come suddenly at an unexpected time, will it be too late to respond. In the meantime, the destruction of the temple will provide a stark warning of the impending ‘final judgement’.

An illustration from the fig tree to assist in understanding the eschatological seasons (21:29-33)

Luke shares the illustration of the fig tree in common with Matthew and Mark, although he includes all deciduous trees (cf. 21:30) along with the fig.¹⁶⁸ The point is that new spring growth is an unmistakable indication that summer is approaching.

¹⁶⁸ Whatever the rationale, the expansion to all deciduous trees makes no real difference to the lesson Jesus teaches. See Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1687; Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1352; Pao and Schnabel, ‘Luke’, 379.

It is often assumed that the analogy is employed to illuminate the timing of the *eschaton*, but this is to miss its prime objective.¹⁶⁹ The seasonal changes of the fig tree illustrate the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the ‘coming of the son of man’ as just expounded. The sprouting new spring leaves foreshadow a time when the tree will be in full leaf and its fruit ready to harvest. The temporal clause, “when you see these things taking place” (ὅταν ἴδῃτε ταῦτα γινόμενα, 21:31) is a reference to the events surrounding the destruction of the temple (21:20-24). The eschatological springtime, which will see Jerusalem under siege by its enemies, heralds the imminent arrival of the eschatological summer, and thus enables the disciples to “know that the kingdom of God is near” (γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, 21:31).¹⁷⁰ In one sense, as Luke’s performance makes clear, the dynamic of the kingdom is already present in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples, being manifest, for example, in the sick being healed (9:11; 10:9) and the demonised set free (11:20). The reference here, however, is to the future consummation of the kingdom (cf. 11:2; 14:15; 17:20; 19:11) that will coincide with the ‘coming of the son of man’ at the *eschaton* (21:27).¹⁷¹ Thus, although the destruction of the temple and the ‘coming of the son of man’ are distinct chronologically, they are nonetheless closely related eschatologically in the same way that spring anticipates summer. Hence, it is evident that Luke’s performance maintains the notion of imminence found in Matthew and Mark. For those attuned to Jesus’ eschatological calendar, the fall of Jerusalem and the temple announces the future yet imminent arrival of the

¹⁶⁹ E.g., Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1353.

¹⁷⁰ Of the three synoptic accounts, Luke alone provides the explicit subject to what draws near, cf. the more ambiguous statement found in Mark 13:29//Matt 24:33: γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἐπὶ θύραις.

¹⁷¹ So also Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1688; Green, *Luke*, 742; Marshall, *Luke*, 779; Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1009.

kingdom of God, at which time ‘final judgement’ will befall all the inhabitants of the earth (21:35) who are unprepared for the ‘coming of the son of man’ (21:36).

Jesus’ statement in 21:32, “Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place”, has proved particularly challenging to New Testament scholars, for at first glance it appears to suggest that Jesus predicted the *eschaton* to arrive during the period of his generation, which clearly did not occur. One way of resolving the dilemma has been to explore the possible referents for ‘this generation’. Bock helpfully lists six suggestions and we can add one more from Green: 1) the ‘generation of the disciples’, and Jesus was mistaken; 2) ‘the generation of the disciples’, and Jesus saw the destruction of the temple as the beginning of the *eschaton* itself; 3) ‘the generation of the disciples’, and Jesus saw the destruction of the temple as a prophetic type of the *eschaton*; 4) ‘Luke’s generation’, and the prediction proved false; 5) ‘the generation that witnesses the signs of the *eschaton*’; 6) the ‘Jewish nation’ (or ‘human race’), which will survive until the *eschaton*; and 7) ‘people throughout this age who resist the purposes of God’.¹⁷² The tension hinges on the understanding that “all things” (πάντα) in 21:32 must include the *eschaton* implied in 21:31 (i.e., “kingdom of God is near”).¹⁷³ However, πάντα is better understood in parallel to “these things” (ταῦτα) in 21:31, which we suggested above has the siege and fall of Jerusalem as its referent.¹⁷⁴ Read this way, Jesus predicts that the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple will all come to pass during the lifetime of ‘this generation’, and this will be evidence that the kingdom of God is near. The generation that will witness “all these things taking place” (πάντα γένηται,

¹⁷² Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1688-92; Green, *Luke*, 742.

¹⁷³ Cf. Marshall, *Luke*, 780.

¹⁷⁴ See also the comment on “all these things” (ταῦτα πάντα) in 21:36 below.

21:32), is evidently the generation of the disciples, the ‘evil generation’ that has been the object of Jesus’ rebuke throughout Luke’s performance (e.g., 9:41; 11:29).¹⁷⁵ Jesus guarantees that ‘this generation’ will see the harbinger of the *eschaton*; they will see Jerusalem surrounded by armies and they will see its sanctuary destroyed. ‘This generation’ will witness the eschatological springtime and know that summer is near. On this Jesus stakes his reputation as a prophet, declaring that his own words are more enduring than the created order itself (21:33). Will ‘this generation’ see the *eschaton* itself? Jesus does not say. The unspecified chronological demarcation between the fall of Jerusalem and the consummation of the kingdom creates some ambiguity on this point; howbeit, the appeal to be watchful (21:36) certainly applies to those within ‘this generation’. The need to be watchful only intensifies for subsequent generations, since the key event within the eschatological springtime has already transpired; summer can appear at any moment.

Concluding exhortation: Be watchful (21:34-36)

Luke’s performance provides its own unique closing to the eschatological discourse, although its hortatory nature is common with Matthew and Mark. The exhortation and warnings in 21:34-35a – “Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down... and that day catch you unexpectedly like a trap” – call to mind Jesus’ earlier teaching to his disciples in Luke 12. There they are warned against the false sense of security that riches offer (12:13-21) and are subsequently exhorted not to “worry about your life”, but rather to make the kingdom their priority in the knowledge that their Father will provide for their every need (12:22-34). To this end they are called

¹⁷⁵ So also Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1009-10.

to faithfulness and watchfulness so that they will be ready, “for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour” (12:40). They are to be alert like a slave expecting the arrival of his master (12:35-38) or a house owner on guard for a thief (12:39-40). With respect to the parable of the Faithful/Unfaithful slave (12:41-48), they are to emulate the faithful slave, whose master arrives home and finds him diligently at work, rather than the unfaithful slave, who takes the master’s extended absence as an opportunity for drunkenness and abuse of his duties.

An alternative textual tradition for 21:35 positions the postpositive γὰρ before ἐπεισελεύσεται making ὡς παγίς (“like a trap”) commence 21:35 rather than conclude 21:34 as per the preferred reading (cf. NA²⁷).¹⁷⁶ The alternative reading, “...for like a trap it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth” closely resembles the language in Isaiah 24:17 (LXX) and may have arisen due to the allusion to the Isaianic text.¹⁷⁷ Isaiah 24:17-23 depicts YHWH’s judgement upon the inhabitants of the earth and indeed upon the entire cosmos as he establishes his reign from Zion. There appear to be a number of echoes reverberating in Luke 21 from this Isaianic text that serve to clarify the intent of this passage in Luke. In Luke 21:34-35, Jesus warns his disciples and their Jewish compatriots in the crowd so that they do not find themselves indicted at the *eschaton* when the ‘son of man’ will judge the inhabitants of the earth and establish the kingdom upon the earth. Hence, the crowd is not only privy to the impending destruction of Jerusalem, but is warned also of the final judgement to come.

¹⁷⁶ See Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1012 and the textual apparatus in NA²⁷ for details.

¹⁷⁷ Pao and Schnabel, ‘Luke’, 380.

The final exhortation brings the entire discourse to a close and couples a call to prayer with the injunction to “be alert at all times” so that they “may have strength to escape all these things that will take place...” (21:36). In this context, “all these things” (ταῦτα πάντα) alludes to everything discussed in 21:8-24, including the deception of messianic pretenders, the persecution to face Jesus’ followers, and the terror associated with the siege of Jerusalem. Such ones will be vindicated at the *eschaton* and be able “to stand before the Son of Man” (21:36). The image of standing before the ‘son of man’ is one “of deliverance, not an image of standing in a judicial dock.”¹⁷⁸ For these ones, “that day” will be the day when their redemption is fully realised (cf. 21:28).

Concluding Comments

In Luke, Jerusalem, the city of YHWH’s affection and the religious and cultural centre of the Jewish people, tragically rejects YHWH’s kingdom agent, Jesus the Davidic Messiah, the one commissioned to bring about Israel’s promised restoration. Jesus encounters an ‘evil generation’ which for the most part opposes his kingdom message to the point that upon reaching Jerusalem he is handed over to Pilate to be crucified. Paradoxically, it is through his death and resurrection that Jesus inaugurates the new covenant and reconstitutes Israel about himself as Israel’s divinely vindicated Lord and Messiah. However, in rejecting his messianic role, ‘this generation’ is subject to divine judgement, which Jesus predicts will come upon Jerusalem and its prized temple.

¹⁷⁸ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 1013. Cf. *1 En.* 62:8, 13; *1QH* 4:21-22.

Luke develops the ‘imminent judgement’ motif as Jesus journeys toward Jerusalem where it culminates with his prophetic action and discourse in the temple precincts. Allusions to the destruction of Solomon’s temple by the Babylonians inform Luke’s performance rather than the apocalyptic imagery from Daniel as in Matthew and Mark, but the net result is the same – the destruction of the temple is carefully distinguished from the ‘coming of the son of man’. The destruction of the temple is an eschatological event that foreshadows the divine judgement to come upon all nations at the *eschaton*, but it is an event that is chronologically distinct from the *eschaton* itself. Indeed, on this point Luke’s performance is the most explicit out of the three Synoptic Gospels.

The ‘coming of the son of man’ imagery still derives from Daniel, and as in the other Synoptic Gospel performances it is best understood in Luke 21 as metaphorical language for the vindication of Jesus at the *eschaton*. Luke, however, does chart the radical transformation that takes place in the disciples’ eschatological horizon that occurs as a consequence of witnessing Jesus’ physical ascension, and which facilitates the later hermeneutical shift to a literal understanding of the ‘coming of the son of man’ expression in the post-Pentecost messianic community.

§10 Summary – Part B: Story and Improvisation within the Synoptic Traditions

The three exegetical chapters in Part B of our thesis have applied the hermeneutic of ‘story’ as developed in Part A in a close reading of the eschatological discourse in each of the Synoptic Gospels. The preliminary discussion in §6 ‘Story & the Synoptic Traditions’ served to clarify both the nature of the Synoptic traditions and the exegetical task. Here, in agreement with N.T. Wright, we developed the hypothesis that Matthew, Mark and Luke are best understood as improvisations of Israel’s story in view of the Jesus event. Through creative engagement with Israel’s scriptures, the Synoptic writers situate Jesus firmly within Israel’s ‘remembered past’ with the result that Israel’s story becomes Jesus’ story. Indeed, Jesus is presented as YHWH’s kingdom agent who brings the story of Israel to its denouement, which in effect is a claim by the Jesus community to be the faithful heirs of Israel’s heritage – ‘true Israel’.

We found Wright’s reading of the Synoptic Gospels inadequate, however, in that he has blurred the distinction between the literary presentation and the historical referent and has given insufficient attention to the unique features in the individual Synoptic accounts. More helpful assistance was found in the thesis of James Dunn, who develops the work of Kenneth Bailey to argue that the Gospels, through an ‘informal yet controlled’ oral traditioning process, preserve the *impact* Jesus made on his earliest disciples. Thus, with striking similarities to Assmann’s concept of ‘mnemohistory’, the Gospel traditions are to be viewed as the *early church’s authoritative testimony to their memory of Jesus*, and as such clarity is given to the distinction between the literary and the historical. Moreover, Dunn insists that, like

oral performances, each Synoptic account presents a fresh retelling of the tradition for a new context (i.e., in a manner resembling Vanhoozer's concept of 'improvisation') and therefore each must be heard in its own right. Thus, Dunn affirms the narrative integrity of each individual performance.

In outlining our own exegetical approach, therefore, we noted that priority would be given to the final form and internal coherence of each Gospel performance.

Additional support for this was found in Vanhoozer's postfoundationalist theology, which argues that each genre mediates a unique perspective on reality, and in

Vanhoozer's theological hermeneutic, which insists that certain aspects of a text's meaning may emerge only when one attends to the genre of a text as a whole. To

this end, we have employed narrative criticism as our preferred exegetical tool, but have also drawn from the insights that a redaction-critical reading can provide.

Furthermore, we have given specific attention to the intertexture with Israel's scriptures, being convinced along with Vanhoozer that a sufficiently 'thick'

description of a text must consider the text's function within the context of the canon as a whole, which we have argued, for the New Testament writers, existed in the

form of Israel's sacred traditions. In sum, our exegesis of the Synoptic traditions has

approached each narrative holistically as an individual and creative performance of

Israel's story in view of the Jesus event. Our primary concern in each case has been

the nexus between the destruction of the temple and the 'coming of the son of man' in the eschatological discourse.

All three Synoptic performances demonstrate careful engagement with Israel's story.

Mark, for example, draws upon second-Isaiah's 'new exodus' motif and Malachi's

messenger theme to present Jesus as the embodiment of YHWH's eschatological return to Zion and John as his forerunner. Matthew and Luke, each in their own way, also evoke YHWH's promises to Abraham and David to suggest that these are being fulfilled in the person and mission of Jesus. Significantly, at no point do the Synoptic performances give evidence that an alternative worldview to that presented in Israel's sacred traditions is the primary influence for their narratives. Put simply, no ethical reading of the Synoptic Gospels can avoid taking into account the intertexture with Israel's story.

While a remarkable diversity exists between the individual Synoptic performances, it is interesting that the basic plot remains the same: Jesus, Israel's Davidic Messiah, is rejected by Israel's religio-political authorities and delivered over to Rome's representatives to be executed, and as a consequence, the Jewish establishment and the temple regime fall under divine judgement. The great paradox is that Jesus understood his rejection and suffering to be an integral component of his messianic mission, and moreover, he believed that he would receive divine vindication, which, like the arrival of the kingdom itself, would have both 'present' and 'future' aspects. To this end, Jesus employed his kingdom parables and his enigmatic 'son of man' sayings to conceal and to reveal the nature of the kingdom and his own role as the kingdom agent. Significantly, one identifies the same eschatological tension in Jesus' 'son of man' sayings as one finds in his kingdom sayings, so that, for example, the vindication of the 'son of man' occurs in the 'present', by means of his resurrection from the dead and the fulfilment of his prediction concerning the temple's destruction, and in the 'future', when he is to judge the nations at the *eschaton*.

In all three Synoptic performances, the intertexture with Israel's scriptures and the integrity of each Gospel narrative argue persuasively for reading the 'coming of the son man' sayings as metaphorical language depicting Jesus' vindication as the divinely appointed kingdom agent, rather than a literal description of Jesus' second-coming. On this point we agree with Wright, France and Watts; however, we have found their hypothesis that the destruction of the temple is the referent of the saying in the eschatological discourse to be improbable. While we have argued that the 'coming of the son of man' saying can refer to either Jesus' vindication in the 'present' or his vindication in the 'future', depending upon the context, when due consideration is given to the storyline of each performance and particularly to the structure of the eschatological discourse in each case, it is evident that it is Jesus' vindication at the *eschaton* that is in view in all three performances. Although we concede that this reading is less explicit in Mark's performance, our case is further substantiated by the recognition that Matthew and Luke, who by default are his earliest sanctioned interpreters, clearly read Mark this way.

Jesus' concern that his disciples would misconstrue the events surrounding the destruction of the temple as evidence that the *eschaton* itself had arrived is common to all three Synoptic performances and accordingly the eschatological discourse functions in each to explain the relationship between this impending judgement and Jesus' future vindication at the *eschaton*. Our exegesis has demonstrated that each performance in its own way plainly distinguishes the two events. While the destruction of the temple is an eschatological event and harbinger of the *eschaton*, it is nonetheless chronologically distinct from the *eschaton*. In all three accounts the

temple's demise is assigned to the eschatological springtime and is predicted to occur within the disciples' generation, while the 'coming of the son of man' is to occur in the eschatological summer and, although imminent, its timing is indeterminate.

Thus, while significant differences are observable between the individual performances (e.g., in Mark and Matthew, Jesus alludes to and reframes Daniel's eschatological horizon, while in Luke, Jesus evokes and reapplies the depiction of the Babylonian siege found in the classical prophets), the eschatological perspective ascribed to the character of Jesus is consistent across all three Gospels.

When applied to the Synoptic traditions, the hermeneutic of 'story', which attends to the narrative integrity of each Gospel as well as its intertexture with Israel's story, becomes an invaluable instrument for evaluating various interpretations for a text. For example, we have engaged at various points with the hypothesis that entertains a future eschatological role for the temple, subsequent to its destruction by the Romans, and have found this to be indefensible from the perspective of the plot in each individual narrative and the eschatological horizon of Jesus as characterised therein and, as such, we have concluded that this concept is alien to the Synoptic traditions. Similarly, as noted above, the literalistic reading of the 'coming of the son of man' saying, which presumes a reference to Jesus 'second-coming', has likewise been found to lack sufficient support when one considers both the intertexture with Israel's scriptures and the characterisation of Jesus and the disciples in each performance. Significantly, on this latter point, sensitivity to the narrative characteristics in Luke-Acts enables the reader to identify the ascension as the catalyst for the disciples' revised eschatological horizon, and hence to be able to

account for the hermeneutical shift from a metaphorical to a literal understanding of the ‘coming of the son of man’ language in the post-Pentecost messianic community.

§11 Conclusion

This thesis has been an exercise in biblical hermeneutics with particular attention to the Synoptic Gospels. We have argued that Matthew, Mark and Luke perform the Jesus tradition – the early church’s memory of Jesus – with specific reference to the narrative world in Israel’s scriptures, or as we have referred to it, Israel’s story, and as such, they require a hermeneutical approach that adequately considers the influence of this story in the production of these writings.

While greatly indebted to N.T. Wright for the concept of ‘story’, our own revision and clarification of the concept has allowed for a sustained critique of Wright’s thesis. In the process, we have demonstrated how ‘Israel’s story’ as a theological-historical construct successfully offers one means of uniting historical, theological, and literary enquiries with respect to biblical studies, and have illustrated this by facilitating a robust synergism between Assmann’s concept of ‘mnemohistory’, Vanhoozer’s postfoundationalist theology and his revised trinitarian hermeneutic, Fishbane’s notion of ‘inner biblical exegesis’, and Dunn’s approach to Jesus studies. When applied to the interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels, the combined argument calls for these writings to be viewed as the early church’s authoritative testimony to their memory of Jesus as recounted through careful improvisation of Israel’s story; hence, the hermeneutic of ‘story’.

The approach offers an emphasis upon the narrative integrity of each Synoptic account, which in turn provides a genuine means of critique of both historical-critical and harmonistic readings of the Gospels. Specifically, a fresh understanding of the

function and referent of Jesus' 'coming of the son of man' sayings has emerged that avoids the blatant anachronism and incongruity that a literalistic interpretation introduces into the Synoptic performances, while at the same time being able to account for the eschatology of Jesus in each as well as the revised eschatological horizon of the early church. Thus, while we have agreed with Wright that the expression is metaphorical and depicts Jesus' vindication as the divinely appointed kingdom agent, our exegesis has determined, in contradiction to Wright, that the referent of the expression in the eschatological discourse of all three Synoptic performances is *not* the destruction of the temple. The destruction of the temple is viewed as an eschatological event and harbinger of the *eschaton*, but it is carefully differentiated from the 'coming of the son of man' both eschatologically and chronologically in a manner indicative of the 'now – not yet' tension in Jesus' kingdom sayings.

This thesis, therefore, endorses the hermeneutic of 'story' as an indispensable addition to the exegete's repertoire. In demonstrating the approach, the present enquiry has given priority to the eschatological discourse in the Synoptic traditions, but each Gospel in its entirety (including John's Gospel) could be examined in this manner. Our examination of the prologue in each Synoptic performance verified that our construct of Israel's story accounted sufficiently for the ideology evident in these passages, but an examination of the intertexture throughout each account would allow for this to be nuanced further with respect to each performance.¹ In like manner, Revelation's intertexture with Israel's scriptures is renowned, but it would

¹ E.g., consider Fuller's comment regarding Luke-Acts: "[T]he more pressing question is not whether Luke has a theology of restoration or not, but how he interprets it" (Michael E. Fuller, *The Restoration of Israel: Israel's Re-Gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 198). While our own enquiry has made a step in this direction, clearly, there is much more to be said.

be intriguing to determine to what extent the Gospel traditions influence the writer's improvisation of Israel's scriptures and to explore how the eschatology of Jesus, specifically his prophetic declarations concerning the temple, is evoked and reapplied for the post-70 CE Christian community.²

The hermeneutic of 'story' may also make a valuable contribution beyond biblical studies. In emphasising the unmistakable intertexture between Israel's sacred traditions and the improvisations of the messianic community, the approach facilitates a holistic perspective on the canon as a unified yet evolving tradition and, as such, counters any Marcionite tendencies in the contemporary Church. For example, it calls into question the frequently assumed disjunction between the Old and New Testaments which at times can be reinforced uncritically in the design and delivery of theological curricula and consequently nurtured in popular Christianity. Another area for further enquiry, therefore, could be to consider how the inherent intertextuality and narrative unity of the biblical canon might be inculcated through theological education and preaching and so encourage and enable appropriate improvisation in the present day.

This leads to an important pastoral implication. Particularly in the West, which is still reeling from the negative aspects of individualism, including a socially destructive distrust of all forms of tradition and authority, the hermeneutic of 'story' encourages one to view life as something which is experienced in community, not only with the contemporary people of God, but also with those of the past.

Individuals are viewed as people in relationship, belonging and responsible. The

² See, for example, C. Marvin Pate, 'Revelation 6: An Early Interpretation of the Olivet Discourse', *CTR* 8.2 (2011): 45-55.

story of Israel, culminating in the person of Jesus, potentially becomes the believer's story, the story of his or her ancestry. Meaning, value, and inclusion, so sorely sought after, find realisation and expression. In short, along with its import for biblical studies, one could explore further the potential of the hermeneutic of 'story' for integration within narrative therapies and therefore gauge its value for those in a pastoral or counselling role.

Appendices

Appendix One:

Overview of synoptic parallels with priority given to Mark's content and order¹

Synopsis Section and Heading [synoptic relationship]	Matt.	Mark	Luke
(§287) Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:1-2	13:1-2	21:5-6
(§288) Signs before the End [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:3-8	13:3-8	21:7-11
(§289) Persecutions Foretold [3x MTvMK/LK]	[10:17-22a]	13:9-13	21:12-19
(§290) The Desolating Sacrilege [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:15-22	13:14-20	21:20-24
(§291) False Christs and False Prophets [3x MT/MKvLK] [2x MT/MK]	24:23 24:23-25	13:21 13:22-23	[17:23]
(§292) The Coming of the Son of Man [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:29-31	13:24-27	21:25-28
(§293) The Time of the Coming: The Parable of the Fig Tree [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:32-36	13:28-32	21:29-33
(§294) Conclusion: "Take Heed, Watch!" (According to Mark) [2x MTvMK]	[25:13-15; 24:42]	13:33-37	[[19:12-13]] [[12:40]]

Key: / = parallel account in same order
v = parallel account in different order

¹ Based on Kurt Aland (ed.), *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* 10th Ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 1993).

Appendix Two:

The 'son of man' sayings in Mark with Synoptic Gospel parallels^{*2}

Passage in Aland's Synopsis	Vocation of 'son of man'	Recipient/s in Mark	MT	MK	LK
§43 The Healing of the Paralytic	P	Jewish Authorities	9:6	2:10	5:24
§46 Plucking Grain on the Sabbath	P	Jewish Authorities	12:8	2:28	6:5
§159 Jesus Foretells His Passion	I _{sv}	Disciples	--	8:31	9:22
§160 "If Any Man would Come after Me..."	F	Disciples + Crowd	16:27	8:38	9:26
§161 The Transfiguration	I _v	Disciples	17:9	9:9	--
§162 The Coming of Elijah	I _s	Disciples	17:12	9:12	--
§164 Jesus Foretells His Passion Again	I _{sv}	Disciples	17:22	9:31	9:44
§262 The Third Prediction of the Passion	I _{sv}	Disciples	20:18	10:33	18:31
§263 The Sons of Zebedee; Precedence among the Disciples	P/I _s	Disciples	20:28	10:45	--
§292 The Coming of the Son of Man	F	Disciples	24:30b	13:26	21:27
§310 Jesus Foretells His Betrayal	I _s	Disciples	26:24a	14:21a	22:22
§310 "	I _s	Disciples	26:24b	14:21b	--
§330 Gethsemane	I _s	Disciples	26:45	14:41	--
§332 Jesus before the Sanhedrin	I _v /F	Jewish Authorities	26:64	14:62	22:69

Key: F = Future glory
 I = Imminent suffering and/or vindication (resurrection / destruction of the temple)
 P = Present authority and ministry

² Based on Aland, *Synopsis*; I.H. Marshall, 'Son of Man', in *DJG*, 776-77.

Appendix Three:

The ‘son of man’ sayings in Matthew with Synoptic Gospel parallels³

Passage in Aland’s Synopsis	Vocation of ‘son of man’	Recipient/s in Matthew	MT	MK	LK
§89 On Following Jesus	P	Jewish Authorities	8:20	--	9:58
§92 The Healing of the Paralytic	P	Jewish Authorities	9:6	2:10	5:24
§100 The Fate of the Disciples	I _v	Disciples	10:23	--	--
§107 Jesus’ Witness concerning John	P	Crowds	11:19	--	7:34
§111 Plucking Grain on the Sabbath	P	Jewish Authorities	12:8	2:28	6:5
§118 The Sin against the Holy Spirit	P/F	Jewish Authorities	12:32	--	12:10
§119 The Sign of Jonah	I _v	Jewish Authorities	12:40	--	11:30
§131 Interpretation of the Parable of the Tares	P	Disciples	13:37	--	--
§131 ”	F	Disciples	13:41	--	--
§158 Peter’s Confession	P	Disciples	16:13	--	--
§160 “If Any Man would Come after Me...”	F	Disciples	16:27	8:38	9:26
§160 ”	I _v	Disciples	16:28	--	--
§161 The Transfiguration	I _v	Disciples	17:9	9:9	--
§162 The Coming of Elijah	I _s	Disciples	17:12	9:12	--
§164 Jesus Foretells His Passion Again	I _{sv}	Disciples	17:22	9:31	9:44
§255 On Riches and the Rewards of Discipleship	F	Disciples	19:28	--	--
§262 The Third Prediction of the Passion	I _{sv}	Disciples	20:18	10:33	18:31
§263 The Sons of Zebedee; Precedence among the Disciples	P/I _s	Disciples	20:28	10:45	--
§291 False Christs and False Prophets	F	Disciples	24:27	--	17:24
§292 The Coming of the Son of Man	F	Disciples	24:30a	--	--
§292 ”	F	Disciples	24:30b	13:26	21:27
§296 The Parable of the Flood and Exhortation to Watchfulness	F	Disciples	24:37	--	17:26
§296 ”	F	Disciples	24:39	--	17:30
§296 ”	F	Disciples	24:44	--	12:40
§300 The Last Judgement	F	Disciples	25:31	--	--
§305 Jesus’ Death is Premeditated	I _s	Disciples	26:2	--	--
§310 Jesus Foretells His Betrayal	I _s	Disciples	26:24a	14:21a	22:22
§310 ”	I _s	Disciples	26:24b	14:21b	--
§330 Gethsemane	I _s	Disciples	26:45	14:41	--
§332 Jesus before the Sanhedrin	I _v /F	Jewish Authorities	26:64	14:62	22:69

Key: F = Future glory
I = Imminent suffering and/or vindication (resurrection / destruction of the temple)
P = Present authority and ministry

³ Based on Aland, *Synopsis*; Marshall, ‘Son of Man’, 776-77.

Appendix Four:

Overview of synoptic parallels with priority given to Matthew's content and order⁴

Synopsis Section and Heading [synoptic relationship]	Matt.	Mark	Luke
(§100) The Fate of the Disciples [2x MTvLK] [3x MTvMK/LK] [3x MTvMKvLK] [3x MTvMK/LK] [1x MT] [2x MTvLK] [1x MT]	10:17-25 10:17 10:18 10:19-20 10:21-22 10:23 10:24-25a 10:25b	--- [13:9] [13:11] [13:12-13] --- --- ---	[21:12a] [21:12b] [12:11-12] [21:16-19] --- [6:40] ---
(§287) Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:1-2	13:1-2	21:5-6
(§288) Signs before the End [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:3-8	13:3-8	21:7-11
(§289) Persecutions Foretold [1x MT] [3x in order MT/MK/LK] [1x MT] [3x in order MT/MK/LK] [1x MT]	24:9-14 24:9a 24:9b 24:10-12 24:13 24:14	--- 13:13a --- 13:13b ---	--- 21:17 --- 21:18-19 ---
(§290) The Desolating Sacrilege [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:15-22	13:14-20	21:20-24
(§291) False Christs and False Prophets [3x MT/MKvLK] [2x MT/MK] [1x MT] [2x MTvLK 'Q']	24:23-28 24:23 24:24-25 24:26 24:27-28	13:21 13:22-23 --- ---	[17:23] --- --- [17:24, 37b]
(§292) The Coming of the Son of Man [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:29-31	13:24-27	21:25-28
(§293) The Time of the Coming: The Parable of the Fig Tree [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:32-36	13:28-32	21:29-33
(§296) The Parable of the Flood and Exhortation to Watchfulness [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x MT] [2x MTvLK 'Q']	24:37-44 24:37-41 24:42 24:43-44	--- [13:35a] ---	[17:26-27,30,34-35] --- [12:39-40]
(§297) The Parable of the Good Servant and the Wicked Servant [2x MTvLK 'Q']	24:45-51	---	[12:41-46]
(§298) The Parable of the Ten Virgins [1x MT]	25:1-13	---	---
(§299) The Parable of the Talents [2x MTvLK 'Q']	25:14-30	[13:34]	[19:11-27]
(§300) The Last Judgment [1x MT]	25:31-49	---	---

Key: / = parallel account in same order
v = parallel account in different order

⁴ Based on Aland, *Synopsis*.

Appendix Five:

Overview of synoptic parallels with priority given to Luke's content and order⁵

Synopsis Section and Heading [synoptic relationship]	Matt.	Mark	Luke
(§203) Watchfulness and Faithfulness [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x LK]	--- [24:43-44] --- [24:45-51] ---	--- --- --- --- ---	12:35-48 12:35-38 12:39-40 12:41 12:42-46 12:47-48
(§234) On the coming of the Kingdom of God [1x LK]	---	---	17:20-21
(§235) The Day of the Son of Man [1x LK] [3x MT/MKvLK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [3x MT/MKvLK] [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q'] [1x MT] [1x LK] [2x MTvLK 'Q']	--- [24:23] [24:27] --- [24:37-39a] --- [24:39b] [24:17-18] --- [10:39] --- [24:41] [24:40] --- [24:28]	--- [13:21] --- --- --- --- --- [13:15-16] --- --- --- --- --- --- ---	17:22-37 17:22 17:23 17:24 17:25 17:26-27 17:28-29 17:30 17:31 17:32 17:33 17:34 17:35 [[17:36]] 17:37a 17:37b
(§266) The Parable of the Pounds [2x MTvLK 'Q']	[25:14-30]	[13:34]	19:11-27
(§287) Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:1-2	13:1-2	21:5-6
(§288) Signs before the End [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:3-8	13:3-8	21:7-11
(§289) Persecutions Foretold [3x MTvMK/LK]	[10:17-22a]	13:9-13	21:12-19
(§290) The Desolating Sacrilege [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:15-22	13:14-20	21:20-24
(§292) The Coming of the Son of Man [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:29-31	13:24-27	21:25-28
(§293) The Time of the Coming: The Parable of the Fig Tree [3x in order MT/MK/LK]	24:32-36	13:28-32	21:29-33
(§295) Conclusion: "Take Heed, Watch!" (According to Luke) [1x LK]	---	---	21:34-36

Key: /= parallel account in same order
v = parallel account in different order

⁵ Based on Aland, *Synopsis*.

Appendix Six:

The 'son of man' sayings in Luke-Acts with Synoptic Gospel parallels⁶

Passage in Aland's Synopsis	Vocation of 'son of man'	Recipient/s in Luke	MT	MK	LK-AC
§43 The Healing of the Paralytic	P	Jewish Authorities	9:6	2:10	5:24
§46 Plucking Grain on the Sabbath	P	Jewish Authorities	12:8	2:28	6:5
§78 The Beatitudes	P	Disciples (+Crowds)	--	--	6:22
§107 Jesus' Witness concerning John	P	Crowds	11:19	--	7:34
§159 Jesus Foretells His Passion	I _{sv}	Disciples	--	8:31	9:22
§160 "If Any Man would Come after Me..."	F	Disciples	16:27	8:38	9:26
§164 Jesus Foretells His Passion Again	I _s	Disciples	17:22	9:31	9:44
§176 On Following Jesus	P	'Someone'	8:20	--	9:58
§191 The Sign of Jonah	I _v	Crowds	12:40	--	11:30
§196 Exhortation to Fearless Confession	F	Disciples (+Crowds?)	--	--	12:8
§197 The Sin against the Holy Spirit	P/F	Disciples (+Crowds?)	12:32	--	12:10
§203 Watchfulness and Faithfulness	F	Disciples	24:44	--	12:40
§235 The Day of the Son of Man	F	Disciples	--	--	17:22
§235 "	F	Disciples	24:27	--	17:24
§235 "	F	Disciples	24:37	--	17:26
§235 "	F	Disciples	24:39	--	17:30
§236 The Parable of the Unjust Judge	F	Disciples	--	--	18:8
§262 The Third Prediction of the Passion	I _{sv}	Disciples	20:18	10:33	18:31
§265 Zacchaeus	P	Zacchaeus (+Crowds?)	--	--	19:10
§292 The Coming of the Son of Man	F	Disciples (+Crowds)	24:30b	13:26	21:27
§295 Conclusion: "Take Heed, Watch!"	F	Disciples (+Crowds)	--	--	21:36
§312 Jesus Foretells His Betrayal	I _s	Disciples	26:24a	14:21a	22:22
§331 Jesus Arrested	I _s	Judas	--	--	22:48
§332 Jesus before the Sanhedrin	I _v /F	Jewish Authorities	26:64	14:62	22:69
§352 The Women at the Tomb [attributed to angels]	I _s ⁷	Women	--	--	24:7
Stephen's Martyrdom (Acts 7:54-8:1a) [attributed to Stephen]	I _v ⁸	Jewish Authorities	n/a	n/a	7:56

Key: F = Future glory
I = Imminent suffering and/or indication (resurrection / ascension / destruction of the temple)
P = Present authority and ministry

⁶ Based on Aland, *Synopsis*; Marshall, 'Son of Man', 776-77.

⁷ In narrative time this is now a past event.

⁸ In narrative time this is now a present reality (although the temple is yet to be destroyed).

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